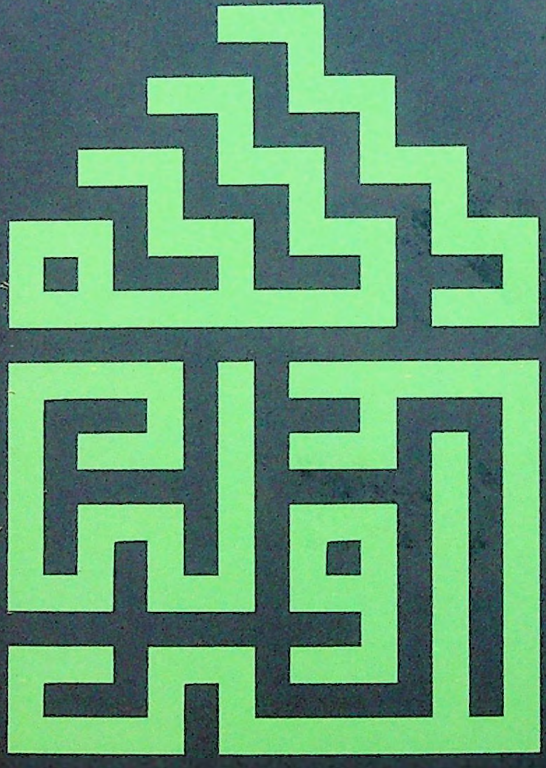
VERSES OF WILAYAH

IMAMATE IN THE QUR'AN



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In the name of God,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
All praise is due to God, Lord of the Worlds
And peace and blessings be upon Muhammad
and his Holy Household

A NOTE ON HONORIFICS

Please note the following abbreviations used in this text:

(s.a.w.) - *ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-ālihi wa-sallam*:
This honorific phrase is used exclusively after mentioning the Prophet Muḥammad and means "may God's prayers and peace be upon him and his family."

(a.s.) - *ʿalayhi/ʿalayhā/ʿalayhim al-salām*
This phrase, meaning "peace be upon him/her/them," is used after mentioning prophets and Infallibles other than the Prophet Muḥammad.

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INTRODUCTION

The year 1379 of the solar Hijri calendar (the year 2000 C.E) was designated as the blessed year of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.). This was because both the beginning of the year, the sixth of Farvardin, coincided with the auspicious feast of Ghadir Khumm, and the end of the year, the twenty-fourth of Esfand, coincided with this great Islamic festival. For this reason, this year was named after his blessed name.

It was highly appropriate that the admirers and devotees of his holiness should have extensive and comprehensive programs during this year to better understand his virtues, perfections, conduct, sayings, leadership, ethics, and other aspects of his life.

Therefore, following the tradition of previous years, when Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi would give exegetical lectures after the noon and afternoon prayers during the blessed month of Ramadan, and in keeping with the Year of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) and the blessed month of Ramadan, which is the month of the Qur'an and also when his martyrdom occurred, he began discussing the exegesis of "the verses of the authority (*wilāya*) of Mawla, the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.)." This topic encompassed both Qur'anic exegesis and discussion about the authority of the

Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), while being appropriate to both that year and the blessed month of Ramadan, the month of the Qur'an's revelation.

We hope that through the blessing of the Qur'an and its true exegete, the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), the light of faith will grow brighter and more radiant in our hearts day by day, so that it may not only guide us but also allow others to be guided by its light.

The Present Book

By God's grace, all the engaging, delightful, and substantive discussions that were presented in those sessions have been compiled. After sufficient research into their sources and references, further elaboration of some topics that were initially presented briefly, editorial work to convert the spoken word to writing, and other necessary tasks, it has been prepared for publication in this form.

Note

1- One might think that with the existence of volume nine of *Payām-i Qur'ān*, which deals with leadership (*imāmat*) and authority (*wilāya*) in the Qur'an, and also *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, which contains relatively detailed discussions under the verses of authority, what need is there to publish these discussions?

However, considering that the discussions presented in this book are more detailed and comprehensive than what appears in the two aforementioned books, and moreover, its practical aspects and important messages derived from these verses that appear in this book are undoubtedly needed by today's society, and thirdly, this book contains new material not found in those two valuable books, the publication of these discussions seemed necessary.

2- The Qur'an is always fresh and has new content and messages for every age and time. Therefore, we should not be content with what has been written so far in the exegesis of the noble verses of this great and eternal heavenly book. Rather, while drawing upon the

exegeses of past scholars and appreciating their extensive efforts, we must continue with extensive studies and wide-ranging new research - especially with the help of new tools and resources - and make the results of these investigations available to interested readers.

3- In this book, the verses of authority are categorized and explained in three sections:

1.Verses concerning succession and leadership of Muslims.

2.Verses concerning the virtues of the People of the House (a.s.).

3.Verses concerning the specific virtues of Ali (a.s.).

I extend my gratitude to all those who have assisted me in preparing this work, especially my dear children who helped in reviewing this book. I also thank you, dear readers, in advance for your comments and suggestions.

It is hoped that in the light of the brilliant rays of the Qur'an, we may always walk on the straight path and follow those pure guardians of authority in word and deed, so that we may be blessed with their special attention. Amen, O Lord of the Worlds.

"Our Lord, accept it from us! Indeed You are the All-hearing, the All-knowing."

Qum - Religious Seminary Abu l-Qāsim ʿAliyān Nizhādī July 2001, Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1422

PART I

VERSES OF SUCCESSION AND LEADERSHIP OF MUSLIMS

1

O MESSENGER! COMMUNICATE THAT WHICH HAS BEEN SENT DOWN TO YOU FROM YOUR LORD...

"O Messenger! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and God shall protect you from the people. Indeed God does not guide the faithless lot."

(*Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, verse 67)

Overview of the Discussion

This verse, known as the Verse of Communication (*āyat al-tablīgh*), addresses the most important issue in the Islamic world after prophethood and messengership. It emphatically commands the Prophet (s.a.w.) near the end of his life to clearly present to the people the matter of succession and leadership after him, and to clarify their duty in this regard. Shi'i and Sunni scholars have offered various explanations of this verse, which will be discussed in detail.

Explanation and Exegesis

Choosing a Successor: The Final Point of the Message

"O Messenger!"

"O you wrapped up in your mantle!"[1]

"O you wrapped up in your mantle!"[2]

"O Prophet!"[3]

"O Messenger!"

The first and second forms of address refer to the Prophet's particular outward state, while the third and fourth forms refer to his spiritual status and divine station (s.a.w.). The address "O Prophet!" appears multiple times in the Qur'an.

However, the address "O Messenger!" appears in only two verses of the Qur'an. One is the verse under discussion, and the other is verse 48 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, which corresponds to this verse. This form of address indicates the importance of the matter for which the Prophet (s.a.w.) is being addressed by the Lord of the Worlds.

"Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord"

This mission was none other than appointing a successor.

"And if you do not, you will not have communicated His message" - The mission being referred to is so important and decisive that if you do not carry it out and convey it to the people, it would be as if you had not fulfilled your Lord's message, and your twenty-three years of effort would remain incomplete!

It is clear that the Prophet (s.a.w.) would convey and explain to the people whatever was revealed to him, but this expression and tone of the verse is intended to make people understand the special and extraordinary importance of this matter.

"And God shall protect you from the people" - Since this sensitive and special mission carries dangers and there is the possibility of hidden and open reactions from those weak in faith (*ḍa'īf al-īmān*)

and the hypocrites (*munāfiq*), God guarantees the protection of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) life against potential dangers.

"Indeed God does not guide the faithless lot" - Although God extends His guidance to everyone, He does not consider those who are obstinate and stubbornly insist on their thoughts and beliefs to be worthy of guidance, and He does not guide them.

Upon reflecting on the content and meaning of the above verse, we find that it conveys a matter of great importance, as the verse is accompanied by numerous unprecedented emphases:

1- The verse begins with the address "O Messenger," and as mentioned before, this form of address indicates the importance and special nature of the matter for which the Prophet (s.a.w.) is being addressed.

2- The word "communicate" (*balligh*) is another indication of the special nature of this verse's content, because:

Firstly: This word is unique and appears only in this verse throughout the Qur'an.

Secondly: According to Rāghib in his book *Mufradāt*, this word carries more emphasis than the word "convey" (*ablagh*); for although this word also appears in only one verse of the Qur'an ,[4] the word "communicate" (*balligh*) may contain both emphasis and repetition. This means the matter is so important that you must definitely convey it to the people and repeat it for them .[5]

3- The phrase "And if you do not, you will not have communicated His message" is the third evidence of this verse's special nature. The matter that the Prophet (s.a.w.) is commanded to convey is the foundation and pillar of his message and prophethood; for if the Prophet (s.a.w.) does not fulfill it, it would be as if he had not fulfilled his prophethood!

4- The guarantee that God makes in this verse for protecting the Prophet's (s.a.w.) life and His promise to protect him against potential dangers is another indication of the greatness and importance of this blessed verse's content.

The content of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) mission is so momentous and important that there are risks to his life and various reactions are not

unlikely; however, God insures and guarantees His Prophet against all potential dangers and harms.

What truly is this important matter that the verse of communication (*tablīgh*) speaks of?

What is this important mission of the Prophet of Islam that requires explicit divine guarantee?

What must the Prophet (s.a.w.) tell the people that is equivalent to his entire message?

What does God want from His Prophet (s.a.w.) that He threatens him on one hand and promises to protect his life on the other?

In short: What is the subject of this verse with all these unprecedented and rare emphases?

There are two ways to arrive at the answers to these questions:

First, reflection, contemplation, and careful attention to the content and meaning of the verse itself, setting aside all narrations from both Shi'i and Sunni sources in its exegesis, and disregarding history and the words of exegetes.

Second, explaining this verse in light of the hadiths and narrations that have been transmitted regarding the occasion of its revelation.

First Way: Explaining the Verse Without Considering Other Evidence

Through reflection, deep contemplation, and careful attention to the verse itself, without seeking help from other sources, the answers to all questions become clear, provided that we judge fairly and without prejudice, because:

Firstly: The verse under discussion is verse 67 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, and we know that *Sūrat al-Mā'ida* is the last chapter ,[6] or among the last chapters that was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.). This means this verse was revealed in the tenth year after the mission, in the last year of his life, and after 23 years of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) communication of the message.

Question: What matter had not yet been officially presented even after 23 years and until the final years of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) life?

Is this important matter related to prayer, when Muslims had been praying for more than 20 years?

Is it related to fasting, when fasting became obligatory after the migration and nearly 13 years had passed since its legislation?

Is it related to the legislation of holy struggle (*jihād*), which had begun in the second year after migration?

Is it related to pilgrimage (*ḥajj*)?

Answer: No! In fairness, it is not related to any of the aforementioned matters! We must consider what important matter remained unaddressed after 23 years of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) exhausting efforts?

Secondly: We understand from this noble verse that this mission of the Prophet (s.a.w.) was so important and critical that it was equal and parallel to prophethood itself. The possibilities suggested by some scholars and the matters mentioned in the previous lines, although important, none of them are on par with messengership and prophethood. We must consider what important matter, equivalent to messengership, had not yet been accomplished after 23 years?

Thirdly: Another characteristic of this mission is that some people opposed it, and their opposition was so serious and severe that they were willing to eliminate the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). The Muslims had no opposition to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, holy struggle, and the like, so this mission must have been a political matter, and some people had girded themselves to fight against it, willing to stand against even the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.)!

When we consider all these aspects and study them impartially and fairly, and judge without prejudice and obstinacy, we arrive at nothing other than the matter of succession (*wilāya*) and successorship of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.), which was officially presented at Ghadīr Khumm.

Yes! The matter that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) had not officially announced until the final year of his life, which was equal and parallel to the messengership and prophethood of the Seal of

Prophets, and against which many people had conspired to fight, and for which God had guaranteed to protect the Prophet (s.a.w.) in carrying out this mission, was the important and decisive matter of succession. Although the Prophet (s.a.w.) had mentioned the succession (*wilāya*) of Ali (a.s.) many times before, it had not been officially announced in the presence of Muslims from all over the world. Therefore, this great and momentous mission was carried out in the best possible way in the desert of Ghadīr Khumm when the Prophet was returning from the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Ḥajjat al-Wadā'*). The Prophet (s.a.w.) completed his mission by introducing Ali (a.s.) as his successor.

Applying the Three Signs to the Matter of Succession (*Wilāya*)

The matter of succession (*wilāya*) and leadership of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) perfectly aligns with the three signs mentioned in the verse of proclamation (*tablīgh*), because:

First: As mentioned before, throughout his blessed life, the Prophet (s.a.w.) had never officially presented the matter of succession and leadership after himself on such a broad scale, and this was the only important matter that had remained unaddressed until the final years of the Prophet of Islam's (s.a.w.) life.

Second: Among the various Islamic matters, no issue is equal in status and parallel to prophethood, equivalent to it, and a continuation of the path of prophethood, except the station of leadership (*imāma*), which is on par with the station of prophethood, and it is the Imam who carries out the duties assigned to the Prophet.

Third: From the time the matter of leadership (*imāma*) and succession (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful was raised, numerous oppositions emerged; even in the desert of Ghadīr itself, a person came to the Prophet (s.a.w.) and protestingly said to him:

"If what you have said today is from God, then ask Him to send down a punishment upon me and destroy me!" And so it happened, and he was destroyed. The details of this story will come in future discussions.

Especially if we place verse 41 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida* alongside this verse, the matter becomes clearer.

In conclusion, the noble verse above, regardless of the narrations, statements, and opinions of exegetes and what has been recorded in history, indicates the succession (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.).

Question: Perhaps the important matter mentioned in this verse refers to the danger of the two great enemies of Islam and Muslims - the Jews and Christians - who always stood against Islam and were considered obstacles to Muslims and Islam's progress. In this case, does the verse have any connection to succession (*wilāya*)?

Answer: Anyone with the slightest familiarity with Islamic history knows that the matter of the Jews and Christians had been resolved by the tenth year after migration (*hijra*), and the various Jewish tribes - Banū Qurayẓa, Banū l-Naḍīr, Banū Qaynuqā', the Jews of Khaybar, and other Jews and Christians - had been dealt with, and they had either submitted to the Muslims or were forced to migrate. Therefore, according to what is mentioned in verse 41 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) fear and concern was about the Muslims and believers, not about those outside Islam!

For this reason, explaining the verse as referring to Jews and Christians is an incompatible exegesis, just as any explanation other than relating it to the succession (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), is inconsistent with the content of the verse of succession (*wilāya*).

Therefore, the noble verse mentioned above, with the explanation and clarification provided, serves as a firm, well-reasoned, solid, and decisive response to all those who deny the immediate leadership (*imāma*) and succession (*khilāfa*) of Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.).

Second Method: Exegesis of the Verse of Communication (*Tablīgh*) in Light of Traditions

The second method for explaining this verse is to draw upon the traditions and narrations concerning the occasion of its revelation, as

well as the views and opinions of Muslim exegetes and scholars, and Islamic history.

Many early Muslim traditionists believe that this verse was revealed concerning the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.). Among these scholars are:

1- Ibn 'Abbās, the well-known narrator, exegete, and scribe of revelation, who is accepted by both Shi'i and Sunni scholars.

2- Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī, a very familiar figure who is also accepted by both groups.

3- Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, one of the Prophet's highly respected companions.

4- 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, one of the scribes of revelation and Qur'anic exegetes.

5- Abū Hurayra, a prolific narrator accepted by Sunni scholars.

6 and 7- Ḥudhayfa and al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib, two well-known companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Along with many other scholars and companions of the Prophet who acknowledge that this verse was revealed concerning the succession (*wilāya*) of Ali (a.s.).

It is noteworthy that for the traditions narrated by some of the above individuals, there are multiple chains of transmission. For instance, this tradition has been narrated through eleven chains from Ibn 'Abbās and Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī.

Among Sunni exegetes, several have also narrated the tradition concerning the succession of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), including Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, volume two, page 298; Abū l-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī al-Nīshābūrī in *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, page 150; Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh in *al-Manār*, volume six, page 120; Fakhr al-Rāzī in *Tafsīr Kabīr*; and other exegetical works.

Here, as an example, we will only quote a portion of Fakhr al-Rāzī's words:

He, who is unparalleled among Sunni exegetes and has written a comprehensive and robust exegesis, and who is an intelligent and learned individual (although he sometimes displays excessive bias that occasionally becomes a barrier for him), after presenting nine

possible explanations for the above verse, puts forward the succession (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful as the tenth possibility.

The verse was revealed concerning the virtue of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and when this verse was revealed, he took his hand and said: "Whoever has me as their master (*mawlā*), Ali is their master. O God, befriend those who befriend him and oppose those who oppose him." Then Umar met him and said: "Congratulations to you, O son of Abu Talib! You have become my master and the master of every believing man and woman..."[7]

According to what is recorded in the book *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, Ziyād ibn Mundhir says:

I was with Imam al-Bāqir (a.s.) while he was in conversation with people, when a man from Basra named ʿUthmān al-Aʿshā stood up and said: "O'son of the Messenger of God, may I be sacrificed for you! I asked al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī about whom this verse was revealed concerning, and he said it was about a man, but he did not specify his name! (Please tell us about whom this verse was revealed?)"

The Imam said: "If he wanted to, he could have mentioned his name, but he did not say it out of fear (since it was during the dark period of the Umayyads, and moreover, he did not have a good relationship with the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.)). However, I will tell you... When God guaranteed the Prophet's (s.a.w.) life against potential dangers, he raised the hand of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) and introduced him as his successor and caliph."[8]

It is noteworthy that al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, the author of *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* who narrated the above tradition, is from among the Sunnis, just as other Sunni scholars have also narrated this tradition.

The conclusion is that the hadiths, traditions, statements of the companions (*ṣaḥāba*), narrators (*ruwāt*), and the views of exegetes and scholars all indicate that the verse of proclamation (*āyat al-tablīgh*) was revealed concerning the leadership (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.).

Messages of the Verse

Two major messages and two important points can be derived from this noble verse under discussion:

1- Although the immediate addressee of this verse was the Prophet (s.a.w.) at that time, undoubtedly the duty of proclaiming leadership (*wilāya*) and imamate (*imāma*), and responding to questions and doubts surrounding it, is not exclusive to him. Rather, this matter is the duty of all knowledgeable people throughout history.

2- Another message of this noble verse is that true believers are those who submit to God's command without prejudice, obstinacy, or factional and group inclinations. They do not merely submit to what agrees with their taste and factional or partisan leanings while refusing to submit when it opposes them!

Fundamentally, the key to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) attainment of those lofty and elevated stations was his absolute servitude and submission to God - the very thing to which we testify before testifying to his prophethood in every prayer.

If we too seek divine proximity and want to be true and genuine believers, and if we claim to follow the school of that Prophet of God (s.a.w.), we must submit to his command in all circumstances, even if it contradicts our desires, preferences, faction, or party.

To complete this discussion, we present here a summary of the story of Ghadīr as narrated in the exegesis *Payām-i Qur'ān*.

The Event of Ghadīr

From the previous discussion, it was briefly understood that according to countless pieces of evidence, this verse was revealed concerning Ali (a.s.). The traditions narrated about this in well-known Sunni books - let alone Shi'i books - are too numerous for anyone to deny.

In addition to the above traditions, we have many other explicit traditions stating that this verse was revealed concerning the event of Ghadīr Khumm, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) sermon, and his introduction of

Ali (a.s.) as successor (*waṣī*) and guardian (*walī*). The number of these traditions far exceeds those previously mentioned, to the extent that the great researcher ʿAllāma Amīnī in his book *al-Ghadīr* narrates the Hadith of Ghadīr with living documentation from 110 of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) companions, as well as from 84 of their successors (*tābiʿīn*) and 360 well-known Islamic scholars and authors.

Any unbiased person, upon examining this collection of evidence and documentation, becomes certain that the Hadith of Ghadīr is among the most definitive Islamic traditions and a clear example of a widely transmitted (*mutawātir*) hadith. Indeed, if someone were to doubt its wide transmission, they would have to reject all widely transmitted hadiths.

Since delving extensively into this discussion would take us away from the methodology we follow in this book, we will content ourselves with this much regarding the hadith's documentation and the context of the verse's revelation, and proceed to examine the content of the hadith. For those who wish to study the hadith's documentation more extensively, we refer them to the following books:

1- The precious book *al-Ghadīr*, volume one.

2- *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, written by the great scholar Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī, with the extensive commentaries of Āyatullāh Najafī, volumes two, three, fourteen and twenty.

3- *al-Murāja'āt*, written by Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn ʿĀmilī.

4- *ʿAbaqāt al-Anwār*, written by Mīr Ḥāmid Ḥusayn Hindī (it is better to refer to the summary of *ʿAbaqāt*, volumes 7, 8, and 9).

5- *Dalā'il al-Ṣidq*, written by Muẓaffar, volume two.

The Content of the Ghadīr Traditions

Here we present a summary of the event of Ghadīr as understood from the collection of the above traditions: (Some traditions narrate this story in great detail and at length, while others are brief and concise, with some referring to one aspect of the story and others to another aspect, and from all of them together we understand that:)

The ceremonies of the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Ḥajjat al-Wadāʿ*) in the

final year of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) life concluded with the utmost grandeur in his presence. Hearts were immersed in a halo of spirituality, and the spiritual pleasure of this great act of worship still resonated in the souls.

The companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.), who were extraordinarily numerous, could hardly contain their joy at receiving this great blessing and fortune.[9]

Not only were the people of Medina accompanying the Prophet (s.a.w.) on this journey, but Muslims from various parts of the Arabian Peninsula were also with him to attain a great historical honor.

The sun of the Hijaz was casting fire upon the mountains and valleys, but the sweetness of this unique spiritual journey made everything bearable.

As noon approached, the land of Juḥfa and then the dry and scorching plains of Ghadīr Khumm gradually appeared in the distance.

This place is essentially a crossroads where the people of the Hijaz part ways from each other.

A road leads to Medina in the north, another to Iraq in the east, another to the west and the land of Egypt, and another to the land of Yemen in the south. It is here that the final memory and most important chapter of this great journey must take place, and the Muslims must part ways after receiving the final directive, which was truly the concluding point in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) successful missions.

It was Thursday in the tenth year of the Hijra, exactly eight days after the Festival of Sacrifice (*'Īd al-Qurbān*). Suddenly, the Prophet (s.a.w.) ordered his companions to halt. The Muslims called out loudly for those at the front of the caravan to return, and they waited for those who had fallen behind to catch up. The sun had passed the meridian when the Prophet's (s.a.w.) caller to prayer announced with the cry of "God is Greatest" (*Allāhu Akbar*), summoning people to the noon prayer. People hastened to prepare for prayer, but the weather was so hot that some were forced to place part of their cloaks under their feet and the other part over their heads; otherwise, the hot desert sand and sun's rays would have caused them discomfort.

There was neither shelter visible in the desert nor any greenery, plants, or trees! Nothing could be seen except for a few bare desert trees that stubbornly fought against the heat.

Some people took refuge under these few trees. They draped a cloth over one of these bare trees to create a shelter for the Prophet (s.a.w.), but hot winds crept under this canopy and spread the scorching heat of the sun beneath it.

The noon prayer concluded.

The Muslims intended to immediately take refuge in the small tents they had brought with them, but the Prophet (s.a.w.) informed them that everyone must prepare themselves to hear a new divine message, which would be delivered in a detailed sermon. Those who were at a distance from the Prophet (s.a.w.) could not see his divine countenance through the crowd, so a pulpit was constructed from camel saddles, and the Prophet (s.a.w.) ascended it.

First, he offered praise and thanks to God and entrusted himself to Him, then addressed the people, saying:

"I will soon answer God's call and depart from among you.

I am responsible, and you too are responsible.

What testimony do you bear about me?"

The people raised their voices and said:

"We bear witness that you have conveyed [the message], given [good] counsel, and strived [in God's way]. May God reward you with good" (*Nashhadu annaka qad ballaghta wa naṣaḥta wa jahadta fa-jazāka Allāhu khayran*).

Then he said:

"Do you not bear witness to the oneness of God, my prophethood, the truth of the Day of Resurrection, and the raising of the dead on that day?!" All said: "Yes, we bear witness."

He said:

"O God, be witness!"....

Again he said:

"O people! Do you hear my voice?"...

They said: "Yes!"

Following this, silence fell over the entire desert, and nothing could be heard except the whisper of the wind.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"...Now consider how you will treat these two precious and valuable things that I leave behind among you!"

Someone from among the crowd called out: "Which two precious things, O Messenger of God?!"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) immediately said:

"The first 'greater weight' (*thaqal akbar*) is God's Book, with one end in the hand of God and the other end in your hands. Hold fast to it so you do not go astray. And the second precious legacy is 'my household' (*ahl baytī*), and God, the Subtle and All-Aware, has informed me that these two will never separate until they join me in Paradise. Do not precede them, for you will be destroyed, and do not fall behind them, for you will again be destroyed."

Suddenly, people saw the Prophet (s.a.w.) looking around, as if searching for someone. When his eyes fell upon Ali (a.s.), he bent down, took his hand and raised it so high that the whiteness of both their armpits became visible, and everyone saw and recognized him as that invincible officer of the Islamic army.

At this point, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) voice became clearer and louder, and he said:

"O people! Who has more authority over the believers than their own selves?"

They said:

"God and His Messenger (s.a.w.) know best."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"God is my Master and Leader, and I am the Master and Leader of the believers, having more authority over them than they have over themselves (and my will takes precedence over their will)."

Then he said:

"For whomever I am their Master (*mawlā*), Ali is their Master (*mawlā*)."

He repeated this statement three times, and according to some

narrators, four times. Then he raised his head toward the sky and said:

"O God! Be allied to whoever is allied to him, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him. Love whoever loves him, and hate whoever hates him. Support whoever supports him, and abandon whoever abandons him. Let the truth circulate with him wherever he turns."

Then he said:

"Let those present inform those absent."

The Prophet's (s.a.w.) sermon came to an end. Sweat was dripping from the face of the Prophet (s.a.w.), Ali (a.s.), and the people. Before the crowds had dispersed, the trustworthy bearer of divine revelation descended and recited this verse to the Prophet (s.a.w.):

"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion." [5:3]

"Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My blessing upon you..."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"God is Greatest, God is Greatest for the perfection of religion and the completion of blessing, and the Lord's satisfaction with my message and the guardianship (*wilāya*) of Ali after me."

At this moment, excitement and commotion broke out among the people, and they congratulated Ali (a.s.) on this position. Among the notable people who congratulated him were Abu Bakr and Umar, who uttered these words in the presence of the crowd:

"Congratulations, congratulations to you, O son of Abu Talib! You have become my master (*mawlā*) and the master of every believing man and woman."

At this point, Ibn Abbas said: "By God, this covenant will remain binding on everyone's neck!"

Hassan ibn Thabit, the famous poet, sought permission from the Prophet (s.a.w.) to compose verses for this occasion; then he began his famous poetry thus:

Their Prophet calls to them on the day of Ghadīr at Khumm, so listen to the Messenger's call

He said: "Who is your master (*mawlā*) and your Prophet?" They replied, showing no feigned ignorance:

"Your God is our master and you are our Prophet, and you will not find among us any who disobey regarding the guardianship (*wilāya*)."

Then he said to him: "Rise, O Ali, for I have chosen you as leader (*imām*) and guide after me

Whoever I am his master, this is his guardian (*walī*), so be his true followers and supporters

There he prayed: "O God, befriend his friend, and be an enemy to whoever shows enmity to Ali"[10]

Supplementary Discussions

1. Explanation of Guardianship (*wilāya*) and Master (*mawlā*) in the Hadith of Ghadīr

We have briefly understood the widely transmitted (*mutawātir*) Hadith of Ghadīr and the famous statement of the Prophet (s.a.w.) that appears in all books: "Whoever I am his master (*mawlā*), Ali is his master (*mawlā*)," which clarifies many truths.

Although many Sunni writers insist on explaining the term "master" (*mawlā*) here to mean "friend, companion, and helper," since this is one of the well-known meanings of "master" (*mawlā*), and we also accept that one of the meanings of "master" (*mawlā*) is friend, companion, and helper.

However, there are multiple contextual indicators showing that "master" (*mawlā*) in the above Hadith means "guardian" (*walī*), "custodian," and "leader." These indicators can be summarized as follows:
1- The matter of Ali's (a.s.) friendship with all believers was not a hidden, concealed, or complex issue that would require such emphasis and explanation, nor would it necessitate stopping that great caravan in the middle of the hot, dry desert, delivering a sermon, and obtaining successive acknowledgments from the crowd.

The Qur'an explicitly states:

"The faithful are indeed brothers."[11]

"But the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another."[12]

The believing men and women are guardians and helpers of one another.

In summary, Islamic brotherhood and friendship among Muslims is one of the most self-evident Islamic principles that existed from the beginning of Islam, and the Prophet (s.a.w.) repeatedly proclaimed and emphasized it. Moreover, the matter of brotherhood was not something that needed to be expressed with such urgent tone in the verse, nor was it something that would cause the Prophet (s.a.w.) to feel danger in revealing it. (Please note)

2- The statement "Am I not more worthy of authority over you than yourselves?" (*awlā bikum min anfusikum*), which appears in many versions of this narration, has no compatibility with expressing mere friendship. Rather, it means to say: "The same priority and authority that I have over you as your leader and guardian is established for Ali (a.s.)." Any interpretation of this statement other than what has been said is far from fair and realistic, especially considering the phrase "over you than yourselves" (*bikum min anfusikum*).

3- The congratulations offered to Ali (a.s.) by the people during this historical event, especially the congratulations from Umar and Abu Bakr, indicate that the matter was nothing other than the appointment to succession, which was worthy of congratulations. For the declaration of friendship, which is established generally for all Muslims, does not warrant congratulations.

In the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad, it is reported that after the Prophet's (s.a.w.) statements, Umar addressed Ali (a.s.) saying:

"Congratulations, O son of Abu Talib! You have become the master (*mawlā*) of every believing man and woman."[13]

In the explanation that Fakhr Rāzī provides for the verse "O Messenger! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord," we read that Umar said: "Congratulations to you!

You have become my master (*mawlā*) and the master of every believing man and woman."

Thus, Umar considered him to be his master and the master of all believers.

In *Tārīkh Baghdād*, the above narration appears in this form:

"Well done, well done (*bakh bakh*) to you, O son of Abu Talib! You have become my master and the master of every Muslim."[14]

And in *Fayḍ al-Qadīr* and *al-Ṣawā'iq*, it is reported that both Abu Bakr and Umar offered this congratulation to Ali (a.s.): "You have become, O son of Abu Talib, the master of every believing man and woman."[15]

It is self-evident that the simple friendship that exists among all believers with one another does not warrant such formalities, and this is only compatible with authority (*wilāya*) in the sense of succession.

4- The poems we quoted from Ḥassān ibn Thābit, with their lofty content and explicit, clear expressions, are another testimony to this claim, and they are sufficiently eloquent on this matter (please review those poems again).

2. Verses from *Sūrat al-Ma'ārij* in Support of the Event of Ghadīr

Many exegetes and hadith narrators have reported, regarding the initial verses of *Sūrat al-Ma'ārij* ,[16] an occasion of revelation whose summary is as follows:

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) appointed Ali (a.s.) to succession at Ghadīr Khumm and said concerning him: "Whoever I am his master (*mawlā*), Ali is his master."

Shortly after this news spread, Nu'mān ibn al-Ḥārith al-Fihrī, who was among the hypocrites ,[17] came to the Prophet (s.a.w.) and said:

"You commanded us to testify to God's oneness and your prophethood, and we testified. Then you ordered us to perform jihad, pilgrimage, prayer, and give alms, and we accepted all of these. But you were not satisfied with these until you appointed this young man

(referring to Ali (a.s.)) as your successor and said: 'Whoever I am his master (*mawlā*), Ali is his master.' Is this from yourself, or from God?"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) replied: "By God, besides whom there is no deity, this is from God."

Nu'mān ibn Ḥārith turned away and said:

"O God, if this statement is true and from You, then rain down stones upon us from heaven!"

Suddenly, a stone fell from heaven onto his head and killed him. It was then that the verse "An asker asked for a punishment bound to befall" was revealed.

What has been mentioned above is according to a narration reported in *Majma' al-Bayān* from Abu l-Qāsim Ḥaskānī .[18] Many Sunni exegetes and hadith narrators have reported the same content with slight variations, such as: Qurṭubī in his well-known exegesis ,[19] Ālūsī in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* ,[20] and Abū Isḥāq Tha'labī in his exegesis .[21]

'Allāma Amīnī in his book *al-Ghadīr* quotes this narration from thirty Sunni scholars (citing their sources and exact words), including: *Sīrat al-Ḥalabī*; Ḥamawayni's *Farā'id al-Simṭayn*; Shaykh Muḥammad Zarandī's *Durar al-Simṭayn*; Shams al-Dīn Shāfi'ī's *al-Sirāj al-Munīr*; Suyūṭī's *Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr*; Ḥāfiẓ Abū 'Ubayd Harawī's *Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān*; Abū Bakr Naqqāsh Mawṣilī's *Tafsīr Shifā' al-Ṣudūr* and other books.

Some exegetes or hadith scholars who reluctantly accept the virtues of Ali (a.s.) have raised various objections to this occasion of revelation. The most important are the following four objections that the author of *Tafsīr al-Manār* and some others have raised after reporting the above narration:

First Objection - *Sūrat al-Ma'ārij* is Meccan, and has no connection with the story of Ghadīr Khumm.

Response: The fact that a chapter is Meccan does not mean that all of its verses were revealed in Mecca. We have numerous chapters in the Qur'an that are called "Meccan" and are written as Meccan in all Qur'ans, but some of their verses were revealed in Medina, and conversely, there are chapters in the Qur'an that are recorded as "Medinan," but some of their verses were revealed in Mecca.

For example, *Sūrat al-'Ankabūt* is among the Meccan chapters, yet according to Ṭabarī in his well-known exegesis, as well as Qurṭubī in his exegesis and some other scholars, its first ten verses were revealed in Medina .[22]

Similarly, the first seven verses of *Sūrat al-Kahf*, which is known as a Meccan chapter, were revealed in Medina according to Qurṭubī's exegesis and Suyūṭī's *al-Itqān*, along with numerous other cases .[23] Just as there are chapters counted as Medinan while containing verses revealed in Mecca, such as *Sūrat al-Mujādala* which is commonly considered "Medinan," yet according to some exegetes, its first ten verses were revealed in Mecca .[24]

In short, there are many cases where a chapter is introduced as Meccan or Medinan and is labeled as such in exegeses and Qur'ans, while some of its verses were revealed elsewhere.

Therefore, there is no obstacle to *Sūrat al-Ma 'ārij* being similar in this regard.

Second Objection - This hadith states that Ḥārith ibn Nu'mān came to the Prophet (s.a.w.) in Abṭaḥ, and we know that Abṭaḥ is the name of a valley in Mecca, which is inconsistent with the verse being revealed after the event of Ghadīr between Mecca and Medina.

Response: First, the reference to Abṭaḥ appears only in some narrations, not all of them.

Second, *Abṭaḥ* and *Baṭḥā'* refer to sandy ground where floods flow, and there are areas called Abṭaḥ or Baṭḥā' in Medina and other places as well. Interestingly, this is repeatedly referenced in Arabic poetry and narrations.

For instance, in the famous poetry that Shihāb al-Dīn (known as Ḥayṣ wa-Bayṣ)[25] composed as an elegy for the People of the House (a.s.), speaking on their behalf to their killers, he says:

"When we ruled, forgiveness was our nature But when you ruled, blood flowed in the valley (*abṭaḥ*) You made lawful the killing of captives, while often We would pardon and forgive the prisoners"[26]

It is quite clear that the killing of the great members of the Prophet's household (s.a.w.) mostly took place in Iraq, Karbala, Kufa, and Medina, and no blood was ever shed in the Abṭaḥ of Mecca. Yes,

some members of the Prophet's household (a.s.) drank the cup of martyrdom in "Fakhkh," which is about two leagues away from Mecca, while Abṭaḥ is right next to Mecca.

Another poet, in an elegy for Imam Ḥusayn, the leader of martyrs (a.s.), says:

"My soul yearns for those dwelling places, while The house of the Prophet has become one with severed ropes A house for the family of Muṣṭafā in Karbala They pitched it between valleys (*abāṭiḥ*) and hills" [27]

There are many other poems where the term *abṭaḥ* or *abāṭiḥ* appears, and it does not refer to that specific location in Mecca. In short, while it is true that one of the meanings of *abṭaḥ* refers to a location in Mecca, the meaning, concept, and instances of *abṭaḥ* are not limited to that location.

3. How is this verse connected to what comes before and after it?

Some exegetes, in order to avoid the reality contained in this verse, have resorted to another excuse, namely that: the context of the verses before and after, which concern the People of the Book, has no relevance to the matter of guardianship (*wilāya*), succession (*khilāfa*), and leadership (*imāma*). This inconsistency, they argue, is incompatible with the eloquence and fluency of the Qur'an .[28]

Response: All those who are familiar with how the verses of the Qur'an were compiled know that the verses were revealed gradually and on different occasions. For this reason, it often happens that a chapter discusses various issues - one part may be about a certain military expedition (*ghazwa*), another about a particular Islamic ruling and legislation (*ḥukm* and *tashrī'*), one section addresses the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*), and another the believers (*mu'minīn*). For example, if we examine *Sūrat al-Nūr*, we see it has different sections, each dealing with a specific topic, from Divine Unity and the afterlife to the implementation of punishment for adultery (*ḥadd zinā*), the story of the slander (*ifk*), matters relating to the hypocrites, modest dress (*ḥijāb*), and other issues (other long chapters of the Qur'an are

more or less similar), although there exists a general and broad connection between all parts of a chapter.

The reason for this diversity in the content of chapters is what was mentioned: the Qur'an was revealed gradually according to needs, necessities, and various events, and it is never in the form of a classical book that follows a single pre-determined subject.

1. Qur'ān, 73:1

2. Qur'ān, 74:1

3. This address is repeated in more than ten verses of the Qur'ān.

4. Qur'ān, 9:6

5. The Prophet (s.a.w.) also acted upon this in practice. He repeatedly reminded people about the succession of 'Alī (a.s.) from the earliest days of Islam until his death.

6. According to a narration, this entire chapter was revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage (the Prophet's (s.a.w.) final Hajj) between Mecca and Medina. (*Al-Manār*, 6/116)

7. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 11/49

8. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/191, hadith 248

9. Some have recorded the number of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) companions as 90,000, others as 112,000, some as 120,000, and others as 124,000.

10. These verses have been narrated by many prominent Sunni scholars, including: Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, Ḥāfiẓ Abū Sa'īd al-Sijistānī, al-Khwārizmī al-Mālikī, Ḥāfiẓ Abū 'Abdullāh al-Marzubānī, al-Ganjī al-Shāfi'ī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī.

11. Qur'ān, 49:10

12. Qur'ān, 9:71

13. *Musnad Aḥmad*, 4/281 (as cited in *Faḍā'il al-Khamsa*, 1/432)

14. *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7/290

15. *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, 6/217; *Al-Ṣawā'iq*, p. 107

16. "A questioner asked about a punishment bound to happen, for

the disbelievers, which none can avert, from Allah, Owner of the ways of ascent."

17. In some narrations it is reported as "Ḥārith ibn Nu'mān" and in others as "Naḍr ibn Ḥārith."

18. *Majma' al-Bayān*, 9-10/352

19. *Tafsīr Qurṭubī*, 10/6757.

20. *Tafsīr Tha'labī*, 29/52.

21. According to the narration in *Nūr al-Abṣār* of Shablanjī, 71.

22. *Tafsīr Ṭabarī*, 20/86; and *Qurṭubī*, 13/323.

23. For more information, refer to the first volume of the valuable book *al-Ghadīr*, 256-257.

24. *Tafsīr Abī al-Su'ūd* which is written in the margins of *Tafsīr Rāzī*, 8/148 and *al-Sirāj al-Munīr*, 4/310.

25. His name was "Sa'd ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa'd ibn Ṣayfī Tamīmī", titled "Shihāb al-Dīn" and known as "Ḥayṣ wa Bayṣ". He was a Shāfi'ī jurist and had extensive knowledge of various sciences, but was most accomplished in literature and poetry. Regarding why he became known as Ḥayṣ wa Bayṣ, it is written: "One day he saw people in hardship and poverty and said: 'Mā lil-nāsi fī ḥayṣin wa bayṣ' (What has happened to people that they are in such distress and turmoil?)." From then on, he became known by this title. He died in 554 or 574 or 577 AH and was buried in the Quraysh cemetery. (*Rayḥānat al-Adab*, 2/97).

26. *Al-Ghadīr*, 1/255.

27. *Al-Ghadīr*, 1/255.

28. *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 6/466.

2

TODAY I HAVE PERFECTED YOUR RELIGION FOR YOU...

> "Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion..."
>
> (*Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, verse 3)

Overview of the Discussion

This noble verse speaks of a momentous and glorious day, which is considered a turning point for Muslims. It is a day whose gifts include the despair of enemies, the perfection of religion, the completion of divine blessings, and the satisfaction and pleasure of God.

What day was this exactly? The answer to this question will come in the following discussions.

Explanation and Exegesis

The verse of the perfection of religion (*āyat ikmāl al-dīn*) states: "Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear

them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion..."

The Day of the Perfection of Religion and Completion of Blessings

"Today the faithless have despaired of your religion" - Although the enemies of Islam and obstinate disbelievers (*kuffār*) fought against Islam with various weapons from the beginning of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) mission until the final days of his life, and although they remained hopeful for the future after each defeat, when this verse was revealed, an event occurred that not only dealt the enemy a fresh defeat but also extinguished their hope for the future.

Therefore, the disbelievers (*kuffār*) forever despaired of destroying and eliminating your religion.

"So do not fear them, but fear Me" - With this great victory and triumph achieved on this day, you need no longer fear the enemies and disbelievers (*kuffār*), for no danger threatens you from their direction. Rather, fear disobedience to divine commands and orders, for in these circumstances, the main danger stems from desires and distance from God.

"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you" - On this magnificent and momentous day, due to the event that occurred, your religion was perfected and divine blessings upon you Muslims were completed and fulfilled.

"And I have approved Islam as your religion" - The glory and magnificence of this day and the event that occurred on it are so great that God has accepted Islam as the eternal religion.

What Day Was This?

The day that this noble verse speaks of has four important characteristics:

First: It was a day that caused the despair and hopelessness of the disbelievers (*kuffār*).

Second: It was a day that brought about the perfection of religion.

Third: It was a day when God completed His blessing upon the Muslims.

Fourth: It was a day when God was pleased to make Islam the eternal religion for people.

What truly was this great day with these four characteristics?

To arrive at the answer to this question, we can follow two paths:

The first path: Contemplation and deep reflection on the content of the verse itself and studying and thinking about it, setting aside the narrations and hadiths that have been related concerning it, and disregarding the views and thoughts of exegetes (*mufassirūn*), hadith scholars (*muḥaddithūn*), scholars (*'ulamā'*), and other external signs and indicators.

The second path: Explaining (*tafsīr*) the verse using the narrations about the occasion of its revelation (*sha'n al-nuzūl*) and the views and theories of the exegetes.

First Path: Explaining the Verse Without External Evidence

Which of the events during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.) does this noble verse correspond to?

In response to this question, Fakhr Rāzī has presented two theories, and Ṭabarsī has presented a third theory. With God's assistance, and relying on intellect and logic, away from prejudice and emotions, and in such a way that while engaging in scholarly discussion we do not harm the unity of the world's Muslims, we will examine these three theories.

First Theory: One of the theories that Fakhr Rāzī has presented in his exegesis (*tafsīr*) of this noble verse is that the word "today" (*al-yawm*) in this verse is not used in its literal meaning, but rather has a metaphorical meaning, in the sense that "day" (*yawm*) here means "era" or "period of time," not a short segment of time.

According to this theory, the verse does not refer to a specific day

or particular event, but rather announces the beginning of Islam's era of greatness and the arrival of the era of despair and hopelessness for the disbelievers (*kuffār*), especially since the use of the word "day" (*yawm*) in this metaphorical sense is common among people; like when it is said: "Yesterday I was young and today I am old" – meaning the period of youth has passed and the period of old age has arrived – not that one was literally young yesterday and became old today!

But the response to this theory is clear and evident; because a metaphorical and non-literal meaning requires a clear contextual indicator (*qarīna*). What clear contextual indicator does Fakhr Rāzī present for this metaphorical meaning?

Second Theory: The meaning of "today" (*al-yawm*) in this noble verse is its literal meaning and refers to a specific and particular day, and that day is the Day of Arafah, the eighth of Dhū l-Qa'da, during the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Ḥajjat al-Wadā'*), the Prophet's (s.a.w.) final pilgrimage which took place in the tenth year after the migration (*hijra*).

However, this theory is also not convincing, because what difference was there between the Day of Arafah in the tenth year after migration and the Days of Arafah in the ninth and eighth years that would make it distinctive?! If no special event occurred on that day, then how could it be remembered with such grandeur?!

In short, this theory too is not acceptable to sound intellect, away from emotions and prejudices.

The conclusion is that neither of Fakhr Rāzī's two theories reveals the hidden secret in the verse.

Third Theory: The late Ṭabarsī, one of the skilled and powerful Shi'i exegetes (*mufassirūn*), after citing and rejecting Fakhr Rāzī's two theories, relates the exegesis of the People of the House (a.s.) regarding the verse, which is accepted by all Shi'i exegetes, scholars, and their learned ones.

The proponents of this theory believe that the intended magnificent day, which caused despair for the disbelievers (*kuffār*) and brought about divine satisfaction, and on which God's religion and blessing were perfected, was the eighteenth of Dhū l-Ḥijja in the

tenth year after migration, the blessed day of Ghadīr; the day when the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), in accordance with the command of God, appointed ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) to authority (*wilāya*) and officially announced his succession (*khilāfa*) to all Muslims.

Question: Is this theory compatible with the content and meaning of the verse?

Answer: If we judge with fairness and without prejudgments, we will see that the verse is completely applicable to the event of Ghadīr. Because:

Firstly: After failing in all their plots, wars, poisonous propaganda, attempts to create division, conflicts, and in short, after all their efforts to destroy Islam, the enemies of Islam were holding onto only one hope – that the Prophet would pass away. They hoped that after his departure, especially given that he had no son to succeed him and had not yet officially appointed a successor, they would be able to achieve their goal and deliver the final blow to Islam. However, when they saw that on the eighteenth of Dhū l-Ḥijja in the tenth year after migration, in the desert of Ghadīr Khumm, among an unprecedented gathering of Muslims, he chose the most knowledgeable, powerful, aware, and strongest individual in the Islamic world as his successor, they saw their hopes vanish, their only window of opportunity close, and they despaired of destroying Islam.

Secondly: With the selection of Imam ʿAlī (a.s.), prophethood (*nubuwwa*) was not cut off or left incomplete, but rather continued its evolutionary course, because the institution of leadership (*imāma*) completes prophethood and consequently brings about the perfection of religion. Therefore, God perfected His religion by selecting ʿAlī (a.s.) as the caliph of the Muslims, a personality who was the strongest, most aware, and most knowledgeable Muslim after the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Thirdly: God's blessings were completed through the establishment of leadership (*imāma*) and guidance after the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Fourthly: Without doubt, Islam without leadership (*imāma*) and guidance cannot be a universal, comprehensive, and final religion. The final religion must always be able to respond to people's needs in

all times, and this is not possible without the presence of an infallible leader (*imām*) in every era.

The conclusion is that explaining this noble verse through the event of Ghadīr is an acceptable exegesis; rather, it is the only acceptable exegesis.

What is Meant by the Perfection of Religion?

In explaining this part of the verse ("Today I have perfected your religion for you..."), three theories have been proposed:

1- The meaning of "religion" (*dīn*) is "laws"; that is, on that day the laws of Islam were completed, and after that there would be no legal void in Islam.

However, in response to this theory, this question arises: What important law or special event occurred on that day that led to the completion of divine laws? (The answer to this question is the key point that illuminates this verse.)

2- Some believe that the meaning of religion in the above verse refers to pilgrimage (*ḥajj*); that is, on that special and magnificent day, God completed your pilgrimage.

But is "religion" (*dīn*) really linguistically equivalent to "pilgrimage" (*ḥajj*)? Or is religion a collection of "beliefs" and "practices" of which pilgrimage is just one part?

It is clear that the second possibility is correct, therefore interpreting "religion" (*dīn*) as "pilgrimage" (*ḥajj*) is an unfounded exegesis.

3- The realization of the verse's content and the perfection of religion and completion of blessings occurred because on that day God made Muslims victorious over their enemies and cut short the evil of their enemies.

But is this statement correct?! Which enemy was defeated and despaired? The Arab polytheists had surrendered to the Muslims in the eighth year after migration, at the conquest of Mecca; the Jews of Medina and Khaybar and the tribes of Banū Qurayẓa, Banū Qaynuqā', and Banū l-Naḍīr had accepted defeat years before in the

battles of Khaybar and the Confederates, or had migrated from the Islamic territory, and the Christians had signed peace treaties with the Muslims. Therefore, all enemies of Islam had surrendered before the tenth year after migration.

Yes, the danger of the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*), who were the most dangerous enemies of religion and who would stab from behind, had not yet been eliminated. But how were they defeated and made to despair?

Again, this is an unanswered question that, like the question raised in the first theory, has not been answered by these theorists.

However, the exegesis of Shi'i scholars - as mentioned before - answers all these questions and sheds special light on the verse.

Yes, the event of Ghadīr Khumm and the matter of leadership (*wilāya*) and succession of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) is the best exegesis, rather the only correct exegesis of this noble verse; because with this event, despair overshadowed the hypocrites and their hopes were dashed.

An Interesting Admission from Fakhr Rāzī

Fakhr Rāzī, the famous and skilled Sunni exegete, says:

"The scholars of traditions say that when this verse was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.), he lived only eighty-one or eighty-two days after its revelation, and after that there was absolutely no addition, abrogation, or change in religious law"[1] and legislation came to an end.[2]

According to Fakhr Rāzī, the above noble verse was revealed eighty-one or eighty-two days before the sorrowful passing of the Prophet of Mercy (s.a.w.). Considering this statement, one can calculate when this noble verse was revealed. To clarify this matter, we need to know the date of his passing. The Sunnis believe that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) was born on the twelfth of Rabī' al-Awwal and coincidentally passed away on the twelfth of Rabī' al-Awwal as well.

Certainly, this theory also has supporters among Shi'i scholars.

For instance, Kulaynī believes that the date of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) passing was the twelfth of Rabī' al-Awwal ,[3] although according to the well-known Shi'i view, the date of his birth was the seventeenth of Rabī' al-Awwal.

Therefore, we must count back eighty-one or eighty-two days from the twelfth of Rabī' al-Awwal. Considering that three consecutive months cannot all be thirty days, just as they cannot all be twenty-nine days, we must consider either two months as thirty days and one month as twenty-nine days, or two months as twenty-nine days and one month as thirty days.

If we consider the two months of Ṣafar and Muḥarram as twenty-nine days each, this totals 58 days, which when added to the twelve days of Rabī' al-Awwal becomes seventy days. Given that we must consider Dhū l-Ḥijja as thirty days, we go back another twelve days to reach eighty-two days. Subtracting twelve days from Dhū l-Ḥijja brings us to the eighteenth of this month, which is the day of Ghadīr. Therefore, according to this calculation, which aligns with the view of Sunni scholars, the noble verse relates to Ghadīr, not to the day of 'Arafa!

Even if we use eighty-one days as the criterion, it coincides with the day after Ghadīr, which is far removed from the day of 'Arafa and has no correspondence with it.

If we consider the two months of Ṣafar and Muḥarram as thirty days each, and Dhū l-Ḥijja as twenty-nine days, according to the eighty-two day calculation, the nineteenth of Dhū l-Ḥijja would be the date of revelation, and according to the eighty-one day calculation, it would be the twentieth of Dhū l-Ḥijja. This means the noble verse was revealed one or two days after the event of Ghadīr and the succession of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), and it pertains to that important historical event and has no connection to the day of 'Arafa!

The conclusion is that there are various indications that the noble verse was revealed in connection with the leadership (*wilāya*) and succession (*khilāfa*) of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, 'Alī (a.s.).

Question: The beginning of the third verse of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*

speaks about forbidden meats ,[4] and at its end, it discusses necessity and its ruling ,[5] while in between these two topics, the matter of leadership and *imāma* is mentioned. What is the connection between the matter of leadership, *imāma*, and succession to the Prophet (s.a.w.), and the matter of forbidden meats and the ruling on necessity? Does this not itself indicate that the discussed passages of the verse have no connection to the topic of leadership and instead pursue a different matter?

Answer: The verses of the Qur'an were not arranged like a classical book, but rather were recorded as they were revealed (and sometimes with changes and rearrangements) by the order of the Prophet (s.a.w.). Therefore, it is possible that the beginning of the verse under discussion was revealed before the event of Ghadīr due to questions asked of the Prophet (s.a.w.) regarding forbidden meats, and after some time, the event of Ghadīr occurred and the verse under discussion was revealed, and the scribes and writers of revelation recorded it following the ruling on forbidden meats.

Then, the matter of necessity, or one of its instances, occurred and its ruling was revealed, and they recorded the end of the verse containing the ruling on necessity after the middle portion of the verse. Therefore, considering this point, the verses do not need to have any particular connection with each other.

Understanding this point resolves many of the doubts and objections raised about the verses of the Qur'an.

Another question: In previous discussions, it was said that the third verse of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida* was the last verse revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.), and with its revelation, religion was perfected and the complete set of necessary rules and laws was revealed to the Prophet. If this is so, then why after the verse under discussion, and at its end, is the ruling on "necessity and urgency" (*iḍṭirār wa ḍarūrat*) mentioned? If the verse of the perfection of religion is the last verse and announces the completion of religion and its rules and laws, then what is this new law that was revealed after it?

Answer: This objection can be answered in two ways:

First answer: The matter of necessity in famine or hunger, which

appears at the end of the verse under discussion, is not a new ruling; rather, it is a reaffirmation of an existing ruling. This is because this ruling had appeared in three verses of the Qur'an before the revelation of the above verse:

A- In verse 145 of *Sūrat al-An'ām*, which is a Meccan chapter, we read:

"Say, 'I do not find in what has been revealed to me that anyone be forbidden to eat anything except carrion or spilt blood, or the flesh of swine—for that is indeed unclean—or an impiety offered to other than God.' But should someone be compelled, without being rebellious or aggressive, indeed your Lord is all-forgiving, all-merciful."

B- In verse 115 of *Sūrat al-Naḥl*, which was partially revealed in Mecca and partially in Medina, we read:

"He has forbidden you only carrion, blood, the flesh of the swine, and that which has been offered to other than God. But should someone be compelled, without being rebellious or aggressive, indeed God is all-forgiving, all-merciful."

As you can observe in this verse, which was revealed in Mecca before the Prophet's (s.a.w.) migration to Medina, the ruling on necessity is mentioned.

C- In verse 173 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, which was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) in the early days of migration in Medina, the ruling on necessity is also mentioned:

"He has forbidden you only carrion, blood, the flesh of the swine, and that which has been offered to other than God. But should someone be compelled, without being rebellious or aggressive, there shall be no sin upon him. Indeed God is all-forgiving, all-merciful."

In the above verse, which was revealed before the verse under discussion, the ruling on necessity is also mentioned.

In verse 173 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, which was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) in the early days of migration in Medina, the ruling on necessity is also mentioned. Since this verse is similar to the previous one (with slight differences), we will refrain from repeating it.

The conclusion is that the ruling on necessity appears in three verses of the Qur'an before the verse under discussion .[6] Therefore,

what appears in the verse in question is not a new ruling and does not conflict with the verse of the perfection of religion, and after the verse of the perfection of religion, no new law was revealed to the noble Prophet (s.a.w.).

Second Answer: The verses of the Qur'an were not compiled in the order of revelation, but rather according to the specific method instructed by the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). For example, verse 67 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*: "O Messenger! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord..." was certainly revealed before the verse under discussion (verse 3 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*), but was recorded after it during compilation. Therefore, there is no issue with the ruling on necessity having been revealed before the verse of the perfection of religion, while being recorded after that noble verse during compilation.

Second Approach: Exegesis of the Verse in Light of Traditions

There are numerous traditions and narrations concerning the circumstances of the revelation of this noble verse.

'Allāma Amīnī has extensively discussed the event of Ghadīr in his invaluable and unparalleled book, *al-Ghadīr*.[7] In this research work, he narrates the Hadith of Ghadīr from one hundred and ten companions of the Prophet, and additionally from eighty of the Successors (*tābi'īn*).[8] The capable author of *al-Ghadīr* has cited the traditions related to this momentous and extraordinary event from three hundred and sixty different books, some of which are from Sunni sources and others from Shi'i sources. However, the noteworthy point is that not all narrations concerning the magnificent event of Ghadīr are relevant to our discussion. Rather, only those traditions that discuss the revelation of this noble verse are pertinent to our discussion, and incidentally, there are quite a number of such traditions. In the aforementioned book alone, the great researcher 'Allāma Amīnī has cited sixteen traditions on this topic.[9]

Consider some of these traditions:

1- Suyūṭī, who was among the Sunni scholars and lived in Egypt,

and who is considered reliable among Sunni Muslims, has narrated the following tradition in his book:

Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī says:

"When the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) appointed ʿAlī (a.s.) on the day of Ghadīr Khumm and proclaimed his authority (*wilāya*), Gabriel descended with this verse: 'Today I have perfected your religion for you...'" [10]

According to this tradition, which is narrated by the Sunnis themselves, the word "today" refers to the day of Ghadīr Khumm, and the verse in question was revealed concerning the authority and succession of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.).

2- The same Sunni scholar narrates another tradition from Abū Hurayra, who is considered a reliable narrator among Sunnis. According to this tradition, Abū Hurayra says:

"When it was the day of Ghadīr Khumm, which is the eighteenth day of Dhū l-Ḥijja, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'Whoever I am his master (*mawlā*), this ʿAlī is his master.' Then God revealed: 'Today I have perfected your religion for you...'"[11]

When the day of Ghadīr, which is the eighteenth of Dhū l-Ḥijja, arrived, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Whoever I am his master, this ʿAlī (meaning ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, not any other ʿAlī) is his master." Then the verse about the perfection of religion was revealed.

This tradition also clearly indicates what we are discussing.

3- Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, another Sunni scholar who lived in the fifth century ,[12] narrates in his book, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, from Abū Hurayra:

The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said: "Whoever fasts on the eighteenth day of Dhū l-Ḥijja will be credited with fasting for sixty months."[13] This was the day of Ghadīr Khumm when the Prophet (s.a.w.) took the hand of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and said: "Am I not the guardian (*walī*) of the believers?" They said: "Yes, O Messenger of God." He (s.a.w.) said: "Whoever I am his master (*mawlā*), ʿAlī is his master." Then ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb[14] said: "Congratulations, congratulations to you, O son of Abū Ṭālib! You have become my

master and the master of every believing man and woman." Then God revealed: "Today I have perfected your religion for you..."[15]

4- Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, who is also among the Sunni scholars of the fifth century, has included clear and explicit traditions regarding this matter in his book, which we will not cite here for the sake of brevity.[16]

5- Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, in his book *Mā Nuzzila min al-Qur'ān fī 'Alī*, narrates from the well-known companion of the Prophet, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, that when the Prophet (s.a.w.) introduced 'Alī (a.s.) as guardian (*walī*) and successor (*khalīfa*) to the people at Ghadīr Khumm, before the people had dispersed, the verse "Today I have perfected your religion for you..." was revealed. At this moment, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"God is greater, for the perfection of religion, the completion of blessing, and the Lord's satisfaction with my message and with the guardianship (*wilāya*) of 'Alī (a.s.) after me." Then he said: "Whoever I am his master (*mawlā*), 'Alī is his master. O God, befriend whoever befriends him, oppose whoever opposes him, support whoever supports him, and abandon whoever abandons him."[17]

The conclusion is that from the traditions mentioned, and the numerous traditions that were not mentioned for the sake of brevity, it becomes clear that the noble verse regarding the perfection of religion was revealed concerning the event of Ghadīr, and it serves as a clear and evident proof of the leadership (*imāma*), guardianship (*wilāya*), and succession (*khilāfa*) of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.).

A Strange Statement from "Ālūsī"

Despite the clear evidence present in the noble verse (which was explained earlier) and numerous traditions narrated by both Shi'i and Sunni sources, some, due to prejudice and obstinacy, have closed their eyes to all of this and interpreted the noble verse according to their own desires, departing from logical discussion. Among these scholars is Ālūsī, the well-known Sunni exegete and author of the

extensive commentary *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*. In his explanation and exegesis of verse 67 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, when he comes to the event of Ghadīr, he says:

Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, one of the well-known Sunni historians, wrote two volumes about the traditions of Ghadīr, then (in order to easily dismiss this book, without discussing or examining its traditions) he says: This book has mixed authentic and weak traditions together! He then quotes from Ibn 'Asākir, who narrated numerous traditions about the sermon and event of Ghadīr, but says: We only accept those traditions from him that do not speak of 'Alī's succession (*khilāfa*)![18]

This statement astonishes any fair-minded person.

Can we reject an entire book just because it contains some weak and unreliable traditions?

Are there no weak traditions in reliable Sunni books?

Would you abandon those books with this excuse?

Truly, this is a laughable statement. But worse than that is what he says about Ibn 'Asākir's traditions. This statement reveals the extent of his obstinacy and enmity towards truth and reality and the Prophet's (s.a.w.) family. Where in the world would it be acceptable for someone to say: I accept what agrees with my desires and personal inclinations and reject what does not!

Would such a statement be acceptable from an ordinary person?!

And from a scholar like Ālūsī?!

Dear readers! You might ask yourself in utter astonishment how someone like Ālūsī could make such baseless statements. But in response, it must be said: Anyone who wishes to make judgments without protecting themselves from their prejudices may meet such a fate!

Messages of the Verse

1. Leadership that Disappoints the Enemies

If you want your enemies to be discouraged and disappointed in every era, hold fast to leadership (*wilāya*) and keep it alive; for just as that day, the establishment of leadership caused the enemies' despair, today too, keeping it alive and holding fast to it will cause the disappointment of hypocrites and enemies.

Today, we must all turn our attention to the Imam hidden from sight but present in hearts, Ḥujjat ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (a.s.), and revolve around his axis; for his leadership is the best connecting link between all Shi'is with their different inclinations. Therefore, the vitality of leadership heralds unity, alliance, and solidarity, and this marks the beginning of happiness and the spark of hope for deliverance, just as division and dispersion are the source of misfortune and decline.

If the scattered Islamic countries had only acted upon this fundamental principle, joined hands with one another, and become united and integrated, the tragic story of Palestine would not be repeated time and again, and those oppressed Muslims would not be torn apart before the eyes of the world. Therefore, the only way to disappoint and discourage the disbelievers (*kuffār*) is to hold fast to leadership.

2. The Completion of Religion and Perfection of Blessing Under the Shadow of Leadership

As understood from the verse, the perfection of blessing and completion of religion on that day was realized under the shadow of leadership (*wilāya*); today too, the completion of blessings, both material and spiritual, and the perfection of religion in all its dimensions and branches, is under the shadow of leadership. Without leadership, even if religion is outwardly practiced and the shell of

deeds and worship is performed, it undoubtedly will not reach the stage of acceptance at the divine threshold; therefore, the completion of blessing and perfection of religion in every age and time will be achieved under the shadow of holding fast to leadership in practice.

Supplementary Discussions

1. Leadership: The Most Fundamental Issue in Islam

There are numerous traditions regarding the importance of leadership (*wilāya*). Here we present one example narrated from Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (a.s.) to complete our discussion. Zurāra narrates from him as follows:

"Islam is built upon five things: prayer (*ṣalāt*), alms (*zakāt*), fasting (*ṣawm*), pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), and leadership (*wilāya*)." Zurāra said: "I asked: 'Which of these is most excellent?'" He (a.s.) replied:

"Leadership is most excellent because it is their key, and the leader (*wālī*) is the guide to them..."[19]

Two points in this tradition deserve attention and contemplation:

a.First, these five matters have not been placed together arbitrarily, but rather they have a relationship with one another.

Prayer is the relationship between creation and Creator; indeed, the best time for the relationship between creation and Creator is during prayer.

Alms is the relationship between creation and creation; through the implementation of the law of alms, the needy become self-sufficient through the wealthy, and their economic problems are solved.

Fasting is the relationship between humans and themselves; through establishing this relationship, humans succeed in struggling against their base desires; indeed, fasting is the symbol of struggling against the base desires of fasting.

Pilgrimage is the relationship of all Muslims with one another so that through consultation and exchange of views, they can solve the

problems and difficulties of the Islamic world and place a balm on the wounds of Muslims.

And leadership guarantees the correct implementation and explanation of the rules of these matters.

Therefore, the above five fundamental principles have not been gathered together in this hadith by chance, but rather they have a logical and rational relationship with one another.

a.The second point is: why is leadership more important and excellent than the other four principles?

As mentioned in the tradition itself, leadership brings about the realization of prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and alms, and the content of these acts of worship and other acts of worship are implemented under the shadow of leadership; that is, without leadership and Islamic governance, these commandments are merely ink on paper, like a physician's prescription which, without being acted upon, will not cure any ailments.

Leadership means the implementation of Islamic law by the infallible Imams (a.s.) and their successors; therefore, the leadership that is higher than prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and alms is that which results in Islamic governance; leadership that originates from the leadership of Imam Ali (a.s.) at Ghadīr Khumm.

2. Leadership Has Two Aspects!

Leadership, according to the explanation given, has two aspects:

On one side is the leader (*walī*), Imam, and guide who undertakes the guidance of creation, communicates necessary matters and issues to the people, keeps Muslims alert and aware against dangers and conspiracies, establishes order in society, restores the rights of the oppressed, implements divine laws, and commands good and forbids evil.

On the other side are the people, who must strive to align their words, actions, beliefs, and thoughts with the views and ideas of these noble ones, and follow in their footsteps. Otherwise, one cannot violate the instructions of these noble ones and commit

various transgressions and sins, while still claiming allegiance to these beloved ones.

Interestingly, during one of my interrogations, the head of SAVAK said: "I am passionately devoted to Master Ali (a.s.) and speak of love for him and hold his leadership in my heart, but if anyone opposes the Shah, I am ready to gun down a million of them!" Can such conduct and thoughts be compatible with leadership (*wilāya*), or is such leadership a false leadership?

Indeed, leadership means the complete conformity of all actions, words, and thoughts with the beliefs, words, and actions of the infallible ones (a.s.).

1. These days, various doubts are being raised by the ignorant and those with ulterior motives. One of these doubts is that Islam is not limited to what it currently contains and that through contemplation and reasoning, other matters should be added to Islamic laws and regulations. They claim that if the Prophet (s.a.w.) had lived longer, other laws would have been revealed to him through divine revelation. The conclusion being that Islam is not a complete religion and needs to be completed!

2. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 11/139.

3. *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* (translated), 2/323 (*Kitāb al-Ḥujja, Abwāb al-Tārīkh, Bāb Mawlid al-Nabī* (s.a.w.)).

4. The beginning of the mentioned verse is: Qur'ān, 5:3 - "Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which has been invoked the name of other than Allah; that which has been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to horns; that which has been (partly) eaten by a wild animal, unless you are able to slaughter it (before its death); that which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety."

5. The final part of the verse under discussion is: Qur'ān, 5:3 - "But

if any is forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."

6. The meaning of the four verses concerning necessity is that in times of emergency and necessity, and for the preservation of life or health, one may consume forbidden meats only to the extent needed, not more. Although this ruling has few applications in our time, it becomes relevant during foreign travel to countries where Islamic slaughter is not available. Therefore, those who travel to such countries, if they completely avoid meat and protein sources and their health becomes threatened, are permitted out of necessity to consume such meats only to the extent that removes this danger. We emphasize: only to the extent necessary to remove the state of necessity.

7. Although other books have been written on the subject of *Al-Ghadīr*, such as *'Abaqāt al-Anwār*, *Al-Murāja'āt*, *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq* and similar works, these books do not reach the level of *Al-Ghadīr*, because the late Scholar discussed the matters more precisely and systematically.

8. The difference between Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and Successors (*tābi'īn*) is that the Companions had the honor of meeting the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) and lived during his lifetime, while the Successors did not have the opportunity to meet the Prophet (s.a.w.) and did not live during his time, but rather lived in the era of the Companions.

9. *Al-Ghadīr fī al-Kitāb wa-l-Sunna wa-l-Adab*, 1/230.

10. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 2/259.

11. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 2/259.

12. In the fifth century Hijri, there was special attention given to the traditions of Ghadīr, and for this reason numerous books were authored on this subject during that century.

13. It is clear that since fasting on the eighteenth day of Dhū al-Ḥijja is for gratitude of divine leadership (*wilāya*), it has this much virtue and equals sixty months of fasting. This itself is another indication of the important event that occurred at Ghadīr, otherwise it would seem very unlikely for such a great reward to be mentioned for fasting on that day.

14. It is very strange that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb himself, who laid the foundation for deviation from the path of divine leadership, understood the meaning of *walī* in the story of Ghadīr as guardianship and leadership, as he says: "Today you have become my guardian and the guardian of all Muslims." Otherwise, the friendship between 'Alī, 'Umar and other Muslims was not something new, but 'Umar's followers in different eras and scholars who are certainly more educated than 'Umar, due to prejudice and obstinacy, have interpreted it differently!

15. *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8/290.

16. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/157.

17. *Tafsīr Namūna*, 4/266.

18. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 6/195.

19. *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, 3/30, Kitāb al-Īmān wa-l-Kufr, Bāb Da'ā'im al-Islām, hadith 5.

3

YOUR GUARDIAN IS ONLY GOD, HIS MESSENGER, AND THE FAITHFUL...

"Your guardian is only God, His Messenger, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the alms while bowing down."

(*Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, verse 55)

Overview of the Discussion

Sūrat al-Mā'ida contains an important section of verses concerning leadership (*wilāya*), since this chapter, as mentioned before, was revealed near the end of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) life. Moreover, the issue of leadership and succession naturally arises towards the end of one's life. For this reason, this chapter contains numerous verses about leadership. In any case, the above noble verse is another one that clearly demonstrates – with the explanation that will follow – the leadership of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.).

Commentary and Exegesis

Signs of the Guardian

"Your guardian is only God, His Messenger, and those who believe." We know that the word "only" (*innamā*) in Arabic literature is counted among the terms of exclusivity, and its Persian equivalent is the word "just" or the phrase "this is and nothing else." Therefore, the guardian and supervisor of you believers are only the three groups mentioned in the noble verse, and besides these three, no one is considered the guardian of the believers. The three mentioned groups are:

1- God 2- The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) 3- "Those who believe" – not all believers, but some of them according to the conditions that follow in the verse.

"Those who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down" – The third group of guardians of the believers are the believers, but not all believers; rather, those believers who firstly maintain prayer, and in addition to maintaining prayer, give zakat, and thirdly give zakat to its rightful recipient while in the state of bowing in prayer.

The conclusion is that the guardian and supervisor of you believers are only three groups:

1- God 2- The Prophet (s.a.w.) 3- Those who believe and maintain prayer and give zakat while bowing.

Question: Who are "those who believe" (*alladhīna āmanū*) in this verse? And what does "guardian" (*walī*) mean?

The above noble verse has two aspects of ambiguity; first, what is meant by "guardian" (*walī*) in this verse? Since we know that "guardian" (*walī*) has different meanings, we must therefore determine what its meaning is here.

Second, who is meant by "those who believe" (*alladhīna āmanū*) with those three conditions? Is the verse referring to a specific

person, or does it include anyone who possesses these three qualities?

Answer: To clarify the answer to these questions, we will use the same two-pronged approach that we used for the previous verses, and then we will address some other questions and the excuses of prejudiced individuals – whose prejudice has prevented them from understanding truth and reality.

First Approach: Exegesis of the Verse Without Reference to Hadith

We begin by explaining and clarifying the word "guardian" (*walī*), because if the meaning of this word becomes clear, many issues will be resolved. Some Sunni exegetes, to distance their audience from the clear meaning of the verse, have mentioned many meanings – twenty-seven meanings[1] – for *walī*, to argue that this word is a homonym with different meanings, and we do not know which of these meanings God intended in this verse. Therefore, they claim the verse is ambiguous and does not indicate anything!

However, when we consult dictionaries and study the words and opinions of language experts, we find that they have not mentioned more than two or three meanings for the word *walī*. Therefore, all other meanings return to these three meanings! These three meanings are:

1- *Walī* meaning helper and supporter, and *wilāya* meaning support and assistance.

2- The second meaning given for *wilāya* is guardianship and having authority, therefore *walī* is a guardian and one with authority.

3- The third meaning of *walī* is friend and companion, even if they do not provide support and assistance. However, since a friend in the realm of companionship usually comes to one's aid, the third meaning also returns to the first meaning. Therefore, according to language scholars, *walī* has two main meanings and the rest of the meanings return to these two.

Walī in Qur'anic Usage

Now we return to the Qur'an and examine the usage of this word in this book.

The word "guardian" (*walī*) and "guardians" (*awliyā'*) has been used nearly seventy times in the Qur'an with different meanings.

1- In some verses, it is used in the meaning of "friend" and "helper" and "supporter," like in verse 107 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, where God says:

"And besides God you do not have any guardian or any helper."

The word *walī* in this verse means supporter and helper.

2- In some verses, *walī* means "object of worship," as in verse 257 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*:

"God is the Guardian of the faithful... As for the faithless, their patrons are the Rebels."

Walī in this verse means object of worship - the object of worship for the believers is God, and the objects of worship for the disbelievers are the rebels, devils, and their own desires.

3- This word also appears in the Qur'an meaning "guide," as we read in verse 17 of *Sūrat al-Kahf*:

"And whomever He leads astray, you will never find for him any guardian or guide."

In this noble verse, as you can see, the word *walī* means guide and leader.

4- In many verses containing this word, *walī* means guardian and one with authority. Consider these examples:

a- In verse 28 of *Sūrat al-Shūrā* we read:

"It is He who sends down the rain after they have been despondent, and unfolds His mercy, and He is the Guardian, the All-laudable."

Walī in this verse means guardian and one with authority.

Certainly, guardianship (*wilāya*) in this verse refers to existential guardianship (*wilāyat takwīniyya*).

b- In verse 33 of *Sūrat al-Isrā'*, which discusses legislative guardianship (*wilāyat tashrī'iyya*), we read:

"And whoever is killed wrongfully, We have certainly given his heir an authority."

The word guardian (*walī*) in this verse means custodian and one with authority, because the right of retaliation is not established for the friend of the slain, but rather for his heir and guardian.

c- In the longest verse of the Qur'an, verse 282 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, which concerns writing documentation[2] when giving an interest-free loan, we read:

"Then let his guardian dictate with honesty."

In this verse too, guardian (*walī*) means custodian and one with authority.

d- In verse 34 of *Sūrat al-Anfāl* we read:

"What [excuse] have they that God should not punish them, when they bar [the faithful] from the Holy Mosque, and they are not its custodians? Its custodians are only the Godwary."

Guardian (*walī*) in this verse means custodian, otherwise it is clear that the disbelievers and polytheists have no friendship with such a sacred place!

e- In verse 5 of *Sūrat Maryam* we also read:

"Indeed I fear my kinsmen, after me, and my wife is barren. So grant me from Yourself an heir."

It is clear that heirs (*waratha*) after death are the guardians and custodians of one's wealth, not merely friends, companions and helpers.

The conclusion is that the word guardian (*walī*) is used in different meanings in the verses of the Qur'an; however, in most cases it means custodian and one with authority.

The Meaning of Guardian (*Walī*) in the Verse Under Discussion

In light of what has been discussed, what is meant by guardian (*walī*) in the verse under discussion, the verse of guardianship (*wilāya*)?

Is guardian (*walī*) in this verse meant in the sense of friend, companion and helper?

This would be contrary to how this word is used in most instances

throughout the Qur'an. Therefore, it is fair to say that guardian (*walī*) in this verse means custodian and one with authority, not friend, companion and helper, because:

Firstly: The word "indeed" (*innamā*) at the beginning of the verse indicates exclusivity. This means that only these three groups are the guardians of the believers, and no others. If guardian (*walī*) meant friend, the exclusivity would make no sense, because in that case it is clear that besides these three groups, there are others who are companions and helpers of the believers. Moreover, if guardian (*walī*) meant companion and helper, there would be no need for all these conditions for "those who believe" (*alladhīna āmanū*), that they should give charity while performing prayer.

This is because all believers, even when not praying, and even a believer who does not pray, can be a companion and helper to their Muslim brother. Therefore, from the word "indeed" (*innamā*) which indicates exclusivity, and the multiple conditions attached to "those who believe" (*alladhīna āmanū*), we understand that guardianship in this noble verse does not mean friendship and support, but rather custodianship and authority. God, the Prophet, and the believers (with the conditions mentioned in the verse) are your guardians and those with authority over you.

Secondly: Verse 56 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, which comes after the verse under discussion, is the best evidence and proof for our claim. In this verse, God states:

"Whoever takes for his guardians God, His Messenger and the faithful [should know that] the confederates of God are indeed the victorious."

And those who accept the guardianship of God, His Messenger, and the believers (are victorious, because) the party and group of God is victorious.

Party (*ḥizb*) means an organized group, and the victory of a party means their triumph and success in a social movement and uprising. Therefore, from this noble verse, which is connected to the previous verse under discussion and was apparently revealed at the same time, we understand that the guardianship mentioned in

the aforementioned verse is a political guardianship and governance.

Thus, the meaning of the verse becomes: "Whoever accepts the governance of God and the Prophet and the governance of 'those who believe'... such a party and group is victorious."

Therefore, through reflection and contemplation on each word and sentence of the verse of guardianship, and setting aside the numerous traditions that have been narrated in its exegesis, it becomes clear that guardian (*walī*) in this verse means leader, guide, and custodian, and whoever accepts the governance of God, the Messenger, and "those who believe" with the conditions mentioned in the verse will be victorious and triumphant.

Who is the referent of "those who believe... while bowing"?

From all the previous discussions, the meaning of "indeed" (*innamā*) and "guardian" (*walī*) has become clear, but the ambiguity of the verse has not been completely resolved; because from the previous discussions, it was not determined who is meant by "those who believe... while bowing."

To answer this question, we must know that among the narrators, exegetes, scholars and learned men of both Shi'i and Sunni schools, no one has mentioned any referent for the verse except 'Ali.

Therefore, there is consensus and agreement among all Muslim scholars that no one except 'Ali is the referent of this noble verse. On the other hand, there must have been at least one referent for the phrase "those who believe...", so that person must have been none other than 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.).

The result of all previous discussions, excluding traditions, hadiths and exegetes' views, comes down to three points:

1- That "indeed" (*innamā*) is a word of restriction and limits guardianship to three groups.

2- That guardianship in this noble verse, like most of its uses in the Qur'an, means leadership and authority.

3- That the referent of "those who believe..." is undoubtedly the sacred person of 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.).

Second Approach: Exegesis of the Verse Based on Hadiths

The late Muḥaddith Baḥrānī has cited 24 hadiths from Sunni sources and 19 narrations from Shi'i sources and references in *Ghāyat al-Marām*, totaling 43 hadiths.

Therefore, the narrations concerning this verse are mutually corroborating .[3]

Furthermore, 'Allāma Amīnī in his unparalleled work, *al-Ghadīr*, cites narrations about this noble verse from twenty well-known Sunni sources; renowned sources such as Ṭabarī's exegesis, *Tafsīr Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, Fakhr Rāzī's exegesis, *Tadhkira* of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Ṣawā'iq* of Ibn Ḥajar, *Nūr al-Abṣār* of Shablanji, Ibn Kathīr's exegesis, and similar works that hold special authority among Sunnis. The narrators of these hadiths are ten famous Companions, as follows:

1.Ibn 'Abbās 2. 'Ammār Yāsir 3. Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī 4. Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, who has narrated the most detailed and reliable account on this topic 5. Anas ibn Mālik 6. 'Abd Allāh ibn Salām 7. Salama ibn Kuhayl 8. 'Abd Allāh ibn Ghālib 9. 'Uqba ibn Ḥakīm 10. 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy.

Additionally, narrations about the circumstances of the verse's revelation have been transmitted from 'Ali (a.s.) himself, and he has frequently cited this verse as evidence.

The content of these narrations is as follows: One day while 'Ali (a.s.) was praying in the Prophet's Mosque, a needy person entered the mosque and made his request, but no one gave him anything .[4] 'Ali (a.s.), who was in the bowing position at that time, gestured to the needy person with his hand. The person came and removed the ring from his blessed finger and left the mosque; at this moment, the noble verse under discussion was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.).

The aforementioned point is supported by more than forty narrations that were revealed concerning this noble verse. Here, we will suffice with mentioning three narrations from these forty, specifically citing them from Fakhr Rāzī's exegesis:

'Aṭā' narrates from Ibn 'Abbās that it was revealed concerning 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib...[5]

A person named 'Aṭā' narrates from Ibn 'Abbās, the famous Companion and exegete of the Qur'an, who said: The verse of guardianship (*wilāya*) was revealed concerning 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.).

It is narrated that 'Abd Allāh ibn Salām said: "When this verse was revealed, I said, 'O Messenger of God, I saw 'Ali give his ring in charity to a needy person while he was bowing, so we accept his guardianship.'"[6]

It is narrated that 'Abd Allāh ibn Salām said: When the noble verse "Your guardian is only God..." was revealed, I said to the Prophet (s.a.w.): I was present when 'Ali gave his ring in charity to a needy person and saw this scene with my own eyes (now, considering the revelation of this verse concerning his guardianship), I accept his guardianship.

The third narration, which is considered the most important and comprehensive narration on this topic, is narrated from Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī. Fakhr Rāzī presents this narration from Abū Dharr as follows:

He said: One day I was praying the noon prayer with the Messenger of God (s.a.w.), when a beggar in the mosque asked for charity but no one gave him anything. The beggar raised his hands toward heaven and said: "O God, bear witness that I have asked in the mosque of the Messenger but no one has given me anything!" 'Ali was in the bowing position (*rukū'*) and gestured to him with his right little finger, which had a ring on it. The beggar came and took the ring while the Prophet (s.a.w.) was watching. Then the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "O God, my brother Moses asked You saying: 'My Lord! Open my breast for me, make my affair easy for me, remove the hitch from my tongue, [so that] they may understand my discourse, appoint for me a minister from my family, Aaron, my brother. Strengthen my back through him.'"[7]

You revealed a speaking Qur'an: "We will strengthen your arm by means of your brother, and invest both of you with such authority."[8] O God, I am Muhammad, Your Prophet and Your chosen one, so

open my breast for me, make my affair easy for me, and appoint for me a minister from my family, 'Ali, strengthen my back through him.

Abū Dharr said: By God, the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) had not finished these words before Gabriel descended and said: "O Muhammad, recite: 'Your guardian is only God and His Messenger...'"

Abū Dharr said: One day, we performed the noon prayer in congregation with the Prophet (s.a.w.). Afterwards, a needy person asked for help, but (due to the poverty that affected most Muslims) none of those present helped him. The beggar (having lost hope of receiving help) raised his hands toward heaven and said: "O God! Be witness that I asked for help in the mosque of the Prophet (s.a.w.), but no one helped me!" 'Ali (a.s.), who was engaged in (voluntary) prayer at that time, gestured with his little finger (*khinṣir*) (that is, the little finger of his right hand, which had a ring on it) to the needy person! The needy person came to him, took his ring, and left. This scene took place in the presence and before the eyes of the Prophet (s.a.w.) (and his companions). The Prophet (s.a.w.) (after witnessing this beautiful and magnificent scene, raised his hands to heaven and) said: "O Lord! My brother Moses son of Imran made a request of You and said:

'My Lord! Open my breast for me, make my affair easy for me, remove the hitch from my tongue, [so that] they may understand my discourse, appoint for me a minister from my family, Aaron, my brother. Strengthen my back through him and make him my partner in my affair.'

And You (in response to his request) said in the Qur'an:

'We will strengthen your arm by means of your brother, and invest both of you with such authority.'

O Lord! I am Muhammad, Your Prophet and Your chosen one. Open my breast for me, make my affair easy for me, and appoint for me a minister from my family - that is, 'Ali - strengthen my back through him."

Abū Dharr continues this beautiful hadith by saying: "By God, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) words had not yet ended when Gabriel

descended and recited the verse 'Your guardian is only God...'" to the Prophet!

After narrating these three reports, Fakhr Rāzī says: "The sum total of reports that have come down regarding this matter are these three." [9]

Two Points to Remember

1- Abū Dharr's report shows that the charity given by 'Ali (a.s.) while in prayer was not merely ordinary assistance to a needy person, but also served to preserve the reputation and dignity of the Prophet's Mosque (*Masjid al-Nabī*), the center of Islam and gathering place of the companions and Muslims. This is because the needy person had complained to God that he had received no help in the Prophet's Mosque, that renowned and memorable mosque. Therefore, his charity while bowing in prayer, in addition to meeting the needs of that destitute person, also preserved the standing and dignity of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) Mosque and his companions!

2- Fakhr Rāzī's claim that the total number of reports concerning this noble verse amounts to only these three mentioned reports is unfounded. As we have seen, there are more than forty reports on this subject, and interestingly, most of these reports have been narrated by the Sunnis themselves. But alas, when prejudice and obstinacy take hold of a person, they lead him to make unexpected statements, even if that person is a scholar like Fakhr Rāzī! Moreover, if more than forty reports concerning a matter like the above verse have reached us, one can claim that several times that number of reports must have existed but were lost throughout history. This is especially true during the dark period of the Umayyads, when there was an official campaign against the virtues and merits of the People of the House (a.s.), particularly those relating to the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.). No one dared to express or spread his virtues, and there were many who knew of his virtues but did not dare to speak of them and took these virtues with them to their graves!

The atmosphere of suppression and suffocation was so severe

that those who spoke of the virtues of the People of the House were pursued. In fact, even someone who named their child 'Ali would be held accountable!

Under these harsh conditions, if forty reports on a matter have reached us, one can boldly claim that several times this number of reports must have existed but were lost throughout history!

The conclusion is that, considering the numerous reports, which reach the level of successive transmission (*tawātur*), some of which were discussed in detail, there remains no doubt that the noble verse "Your guardian is only God..." was revealed concerning the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), and that he, after God and His Prophet, is the guardian of the Muslims and their Imam, leader, and guide.

Excuses and Responses

Despite the clear indication of this noble verse regarding the guardianship (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), some scholars have raised objections and criticisms concerning the verse's indication, many of which, though presented in the form of objections and questions, are in reality mere excuses![10]

Consider some examples of these objections:

First Objection: *Innamā* Does Not Indicate Exclusivity!

As discussed previously, the argument based on the above verse rested on three points; one of them being that the word "*innamā*" in the verse indicates exclusivity and restricts guardianship to the three groups mentioned in the verse. Therefore, the guardianship in question is not established for others.

Some Sunni exegetes have said: "*Innamā*" in the above verse does not indicate exclusivity, because there is another verse in the Qur'an that contains the word "*innamā*" but does not indicate exclusivity, and that is verse 20 of *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd*, where we read:

"Know that the life of this world is just play and diversion, and

glitter, and mutual vainglory among you and covetousness for wealth and children..."

"*Innamā*" in the above verse does not mean exclusivity; because we know that worldly life is not only what is mentioned in the verse, but also includes pleasure, worship, work and activity, acquisition of knowledge, and other matters. Therefore, just as "*innamā*" in this verse does not indicate exclusivity, it does not indicate exclusivity in the verse of guardianship either, so the argument based on that verse is incomplete.

Response: This objection is among those that appear in the guise of an objection but are in reality mere excuses; because we believe that:

Firstly: "*Innamā*" in this verse does indeed indicate exclusivity, and from the perspective of a believing and enlightened person, the world is truly nothing but play, diversion, and the like. You have become captivated by the glitter of the world and imagine that the world is something more, but if you look with the eye of truth, you will see governments, positions, mansions, palaces, and all worldly manifestations as nothing more than toys with which worldly people, like children, are preoccupied.

Secondly: Even if in one instance the word "*innamā*" is not used in its true meaning, this does not justify interpreting it in a non-literal sense in other cases.

Therefore, without doubt, "*innamā*" in this noble verse indicates exclusivity and the argument based on the verse is complete.

Second Objection: Giving a Ring is an Excessive Action!

The second objection, which is more like an excuse and has been raised by Sunni exegetes, is this: We accept that this noble verse was revealed concerning Ali (a.s.), but the performance of this action by Ali ibn Abi Talib during prayer constitutes an "excessive action" (*fi 'l kathīr*), and an excessive action invalidates prayer. Would Ali perform an action during prayer that would cause it to become invalid?

Answer: The response to this excuse is also clear, because:

Firstly: An excessive action (*fi 'l kathīr*), as its name suggests, refers to performing many actions that are unrelated to prayer and disrupt its form, such as when someone in the middle of prayer, upon hearing good news, begins clapping, jumping up and down, and whistling and cheering. But is pointing to a beggar in need, in such a way that either His Holiness removes his ring from his hand, or rather the needy person does this himself, an "excessive action" (*fi 'l kathīr*)?![11] How can such an act be excessive when according to traditions, a person praying is permitted to wash their nose if it bleeds during prayer when washing facilities are nearby, and continue their prayer!? Or if they see a dangerous animal nearby, they may kill it and continue their prayer?

Are these actions not excessive, but a single gesture is excessive?!

Secondly: This excuse, God forbid, is an objection and criticism against God! For God praises Ali (a.s.) in the verse that was revealed regarding this action. If his action had invalidated his prayer, would God have revealed a verse in his honor and praise?

Therefore, this objection is nothing but an excuse and the result of prejudice and obstinacy.

Third Objection: The Ring Was Very Valuable!

According to some traditions, the aforementioned ring was very valuable and precious, to the extent that some say its value was equal to the tax revenue of an entire province, like the Levant. Was not the use of such a valuable ring by Ali ibn Abi Talib extravagant and forbidden?

Answer: The response to this excuse is also clear, because:

Firstly: This claim is not found in any reliable tradition. Rather, it appears that the ring in question was an ordinary, common ring. This is because at that time, Iran, the Levant, and similar regions had not

yet been conquered, and such vast wealth had not yet come into Muslim possession. These conquests occurred after the passing of the Prophet (s.a.w.) during the era of the caliphs. Moreover, how could Ali (a.s.), whose food even at the height of his power and caliphate consisted of no more than one type of stew, who mostly subsisted on barley bread, and whose clothing was usually coarse cotton, have used such an expensive ring? Therefore, there is no doubt that this weak tradition, which neither aligns with other traditions on this topic, nor is supported by Ali's (a.s.) lifestyle, nor is consistent with history, was fabricated for specific purposes!

Secondly: How is it possible that Ali (a.s.) would possess such an expensive ring that its use would be considered extravagant and forbidden, give it in charity, and then be praised by God for it?! Therefore, from the fact that this noble verse was revealed in praise and commendation of such a person and such an action, we understand that these claims have no foundation and were fabricated for specific purposes.

Fourth Objection: This action is incompatible with presence of heart!

Given the presence of heart that Ali (a.s.) had during the remembrance of God in general, and during prayer in particular, when he would become immersed in God's attributes of majesty and beauty and had no attention to anything besides God - to the extent that a surgical operation to remove an arrowhead, which was difficult and painful for Ali (a.s.) in normal circumstances outside of prayer, was performed during prayer [12] when he was like a love-struck mystic annihilated in God and paying attention to nothing but Him - given this extraordinary presence of heart, how could Ali (a.s.) pay attention to the beggar's words during prayer and help him while in the bowing position?! In short, this matter is incompatible with Ali's (a.s.) complete and perfect presence of heart during prayer.

Answer: Firstly: After losing hope of receiving help, the beggar began his complaint to God with God's name: "O God, bear

witness..." Therefore, it was God's name that drew Ali's attention to the beggar, and this does not conflict with presence of heart and attention to God during prayer.

Moreover, does not the follower in congregational prayer hear the voice of the one calling the *takbīr* or the imam and follow them? If they cannot hear, how can they perform the prayer with them?! And if they can hear, does this mean there is no presence of heart in any congregational prayer?!

Secondly: Given that in the traditions the beggar is referred to as God's messenger, is there any problem with hearing his voice? What contradiction is there between hearing the voice of God's messenger and presence of heart?[13]

Thirdly: Is not hearing the voice of the oppressed and solving their problem, even during prayer, an act of worship?[14] If it is worship and Ali (a.s.) was drawn to it and performed it, not only was his action without fault, but it counts as worship within worship.

What is problematic is attending to oneself during prayer, but attending to the needs of an oppressed person in need, which counts as worship, is not problematic.

Therefore, this objection is also rejected, and in reality, the aim of those who raise this objection and similar objections is to diminish the verse's indication of the leadership (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.).

Fifth Objection: Why are all the pronouns in the verse plural?

As previously mentioned, the verse establishes leadership for three groups, and regarding the third group, all the pronouns, verbs and relative pronouns appear in the plural form.

1."Those who" (*alladhīna*) 2. "believe" 3. "who" (*alladhīna*) 4. "maintain" 5. "give" 6. "they" 7. "bowing down."

All seven words mentioned above are in plural form, meaning that different individuals gave charity while bowing down, whereas in all narrations only Ali (a.s.) is mentioned as the one who gave charity while bowing. Given this point, are the narrations concerning the

occasion of revelation compatible with the verse? It is clear that if there is a contradiction between a verse of the Qur'an and one or more narrations, we must abandon those narrations and act according to the content and meaning of the Qur'anic verse. Therefore, the above contradiction between the verse and the narrations invalidates the narrations.

Response: Sunni scholars and exegetes have themselves answered this objection. Fakhr Rāzī responds to this question by saying:

The plural form is sometimes used as a mark of respect. That is, sometimes even when addressing a single person, the plural form is used out of respect, just as in Persian where instead of saying "you went, said, came, etc." (singular), one says "you went, said, came, etc." (plural). Therefore, in Arabic literature, sometimes the plural form is used instead of the singular as a mark of respect, and this is the case in the above verse.[15]

Ālūsī gives another answer in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*; he says:

Sometimes the plural form is used instead of the singular form either due to the greatness of the person or the greatness of the deed, and this is common in the Arabic language. However, since this usage is metaphorical, it requires contextual evidence.[16]

As for our response: First: As you mentioned, the use of the plural form instead of the singular to show respect for a person or the greatness of a deed is common and customary, and in the verse under discussion, the plural form is used for this reason. The contextual evidence for this metaphorical usage is that none of the scholars, even the most partisan Sunni scholars, believe that anyone other than Ali (a.s.) gave charity while bowing down to be included in the verse. This itself is the best evidence for using the plural form in a case where the singular form should be used.

Second: In the verses of the Qur'an, the plural form is extensively used where the singular form should be used; we will mention seven examples of this:

1- In verse 215 of *Sūrat al-Baqara* we read:

"They ask you as to what they should spend. Say, 'Whatever wealth you spend, let it be for parents, relatives, orphans, the needy,

and the traveller.' And whatever good that you may do, God indeed knows it."

In this verse, the forms "they ask you" (*yasʾalūnaka*), "they spend" (*yunfiqūn*), "you spent" (*anfaqtum*), and "you do" (*tafʿalū*) appear in the plural form. At first glance, it appears that a group of Muslims posed this question, but according to the context of revelation, only one person asked this question, and he was a wealthy man named ʿAmr ibn Jamūḥ .[17] Therefore, in this verse, the plural form is used instead of the singular, either due to the greatness of the deed, which is charity, or out of respect for the questioner, ʿAmr ibn Jamūḥ.

Note: An interesting point in this verse is that God, in responding to ʿAmr ibn Jamūḥ's question, addresses a different matter. While ʿAmr asks about the type of wealth that should be spent in charity, God speaks about those who should receive charity. The message of this type of response emphasizes the importance of how charity is spent, that one should first consider one's parents, relatives, and family members before turning to others.

2- God says in verse 274 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*:

"Those who give their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve."

In this verse too, the words "those" (*alladhīna*), "they spend" (*yunfiqūn*), "their wealth" (*amwālahum*), "for them" (*lahum*), "their reward" (*ajruhum*), "their Lord" (*rabbihim*), "upon them" (*ʿalayhim*), "they" (*hum*), and "they grieve" (*yaḥzanūn*) all appear in the plural form. However, many exegetes have said that this refers to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), who would give charity night and day, secretly and openly. According to a narration, he had four dirhams: he gave one in charity at night, another during the day, a third openly, and the fourth secretly, and this verse was revealed regarding his charitable giving![18]

Question: Is it possible for a verse to be revealed for such minor acts, like giving four dirhams in charity?

Answer: What is important from Islam's perspective is the quality and manner of the deed, not its quantity. Therefore, if an action is

done sincerely, a verse might be revealed even regarding charity less than four dirhams. However, if someone were to give a mountain of gold in charity without sincerity, it would have no value and no verse would be revealed regarding it.

In verse 173 of *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, we read:

"Those to whom the people said, 'All the people have gathered against you; so fear them.' That only increased them in faith, and they said, 'God is sufficient for us, and He is an excellent trustee.'"

This verse was revealed concerning the Battle of Uḥud, when a group of new Muslims disobeyed the Prophet's (s.a.w.) command during the battle and abandoned their assigned positions to collect war spoils. The defeated enemy took advantage of the Muslims' negligence, circled around Mount Uḥud, and surrounded the Muslims. Thus, the defeated enemy became victorious, and seventy Muslims were martyred!

The disbelievers and polytheists, without finishing the job, were content with their limited victory and returned to Mecca. During their return journey, one of them said: "Now that we have achieved this much victory, why didn't we kill the Prophet of Islam to end Islam altogether? If we don't do this today, Islam and Muslims will trouble us again in the future!"

His words influenced the others, and they all began calling for a return to continue the battle! Among the polytheists was a person named "Nu'aym ibn Mas'ūd" or "Ma'bad al-Khuzā'ī" who was dissatisfied with continuing the war. Before the disbelievers could reach the Muslims, he informed the Muslims about the disbelievers' return and their intentions. Some Muslims became frightened by this news and said: "When we were all healthy, we suffered such a heavy defeat. Now that we have so many dead and wounded, how can we resist them!" But another group of Muslims said: "Not only will we fight them, but we will go to meet them." They even placed the wounded at the front of the army and moved toward the enemy. When the enemy saw that the Muslims were coming to meet them with their wounded, they became afraid and, to preserve their limited

victory and success, retreated and refrained from further engagement.

The above noble verse was revealed regarding this story. It refers to "Nuʿaym ibn Masʿūd" or "Maʿbad al-Khuzāʿī," who informed the Muslims of the disbelievers' decision, as "people" (*nās*), even though he was just one person. However, because his action was so momentous, the plural form was used instead of the singular as a mark of respect and to emphasize the magnitude of his deed.

In verse 61 of *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān*, God says: "Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down God's curse upon the liars.'"

This verse concerns the story of *mubāhala* ("mutual imprecation"). In this event - as everyone knows - from the Prophet's (s.a.w.) side came Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn (a.s.). The meaning of "our sons" (*abnāʾinā*) in this noble verse refers to Hasan and Husayn (a.s.), and the meaning of "our women" (*nisāʾanā*), which is plural, refers to Fatima Zahra (a.s.), and the meaning of "our souls" (*anfusanā*), which is also plural, refers to Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.).[19]

Therefore, in this noble verse as well, the plural forms, namely "our women" (*nisāʾanā*) and "our souls" (*anfusanā*), are used to refer to the singular, namely "Fatima" and "Ali."

In the first verse of *Sūrat al-Mumtaḥana*, we read:

"O you who have faith! Do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends..."

Many exegetes (*mufassirūn*) have said that this verse was revealed concerning "Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Baltaʿa," who was just one person, yet the plural forms "those who" (*alladhīna*), "believe" (*āmanū*), "do not take" (*lā tattakhidhū*), and "your enemy" (*ʿaduwwakum*) are all used. This is due to the gravity of what he intended to do, which was: When the Prophet (s.a.w.) decided to conquer Mecca, he blocked all routes leading to Mecca so that news of the Muslim army's advance would not reach the disbelievers and polytheists of Mecca, allowing them to be caught off guard

and surrender without bloodshed. Ḥāṭib, who had wealth and property in Mecca, thought to himself, "By conveying news of the Muslim army's advance to Mecca, I will retrieve my property from the polytheists," or as politicians would say: "Give a concession to gain a concession!"

With this aim, he wrote a letter to the leaders of Mecca and entrusted it to a woman named "Sāra" to deliver to Mecca. Sāra hid the letter in her braids and set out toward Mecca.

Gabriel descended and informed the Prophet (s.a.w.) of this plot. The Prophet assigned Ali (a.s.) and several others to discover the letter. They pursued the woman and finally found the letter and returned to Medina. Following this incident, the verse was revealed, reproaching Ḥāṭib. Some companions suggested to the Prophet (s.a.w.) that Ḥāṭib should be executed, but the Prophet (s.a.w.), seeing that Ḥāṭib was remorseful and had previously rendered services and was counted among the warriors of the Battle of Badr, pardoned and freed him.[20]

In this verse too, although "Ḥāṭib" was just one person, plural forms were used.

6- In verse 52 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, we read:

"Yet you see those in whose hearts is a sickness rushing to them, saying, 'We fear lest a turn of fortune should visit us...'"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) had ordered Muslims to sever their ties with the disbelievers and polytheists. One of the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*), named "'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy," said: "If we cut off relations, our lives will be disrupted and we will face difficulties." The above verse was revealed concerning this hypocrite.[21]

The person who spoke of maintaining relations with the disbelievers and polytheists was just one individual, yet the verse uses plural forms: "those who" (*alladhīna*), "their hearts" (*qulūbihim*), "they rush" (*yusāri'ūn*), "they say" (*yaqūlūn*), "we fear" (*nakhshā*), and "visit us" (*tuṣībanā*). Therefore, using plural forms for the singular is permissible when there is contextual evidence.

7- In verse eight of *Sūrat al-Munāfiqūn*, God says:

"They say, 'When we return to the city, the mighty will surely

expel the abased from it.' Yet all might belongs to God and His Messenger, and the faithful, but the hypocrites do not know."

This verse was revealed after the Battle of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq, which took place in the sixth year after migration in the land of "Qadīd." During a dispute between one of the migrants (*muhājirīn*) and one of the helpers (*anṣār*), the leader of the hypocrites, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ubayy, made a very ugly remark, saying: "We gave shelter to these migrants and helped them, but our situation is like the famous proverb that says: 'Fatten your dog and it will eat you.'" Then he swore that upon returning to Medina, he would expel the migrants from the city, after which this noble verse was revealed .[22]

As you can observe, although only one person made this statement, plural forms like "they say" (*yaqūlūn*) and "we returned" (*raja ʿnā*) are used.

Therefore, in these seven verses that we have explained, and in other verses of the Qur'an that we have not addressed, plural forms have been used where singular forms should have been used, and this is a common practice in the Qur'an.

Thus, if plural forms are also used in the verse of authority (*wilāya*), even though no one except ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) gave charity while bowing, this does not diminish the verse's significance. Rather, this was done to emphasize the greatness of ʿAlī (a.s.) and his action.

The Sixth Objection: What is the meaning of ʿAlī's (a.s.) authority during the lifetime of the Prophet (s.a.w.)?

Another objection raised by Fakhr Rāzī[23] and others is this:

If authority (*wilāya*) in this verse means guardianship, having authority, leadership and governance, what meaning does ʿAlī's (a.s.) authority have during the lifetime of the Prophet (s.a.w.)?

Because even if this meaning is established for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), authority would be established for him after the Prophet's passing, but during the lifetime of the Prophet (s.a.w.), such authority is not established for him. However, if we take authority to mean

friendship and support, there is no problem, since 'Alī was a friend and supporter of the believers even during the Prophet's time!"

Response: The answer to this objection is also clear, because the authority of a guardian, successor, deputy and heir has always been potential rather than actual, and this meaning is essentially contained within these terms. When Zechariah (a.s.) asked God for a son to be his guardian, successor and heir, and God granted his request by giving him John ,[24] was John his father's heir, guardian and successor during his father's lifetime, or after his father's passing? It is clear that these matters come after the father's death.

This is a conventional and rational matter; when people write wills and appoint executors for themselves, do they grant authority and power to the executor before their death, or do these pertain to after death? Fakhr Rāzī surely had a will and chose an executor for himself - was his executor his successor during his lifetime, or after his death!? Moreover, all rulers of the world appoint deputies and successors for themselves, but none of them have any power during the current ruler's lifetime; rather, their power and authority are for after the current ruler's death.

Therefore, authority (*wilāya*) in this noble verse means having authority, guardianship, and leadership of the community, but all these meanings become actualized for 'Alī (a.s.) after the passing of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Furthermore, the matter of appointing the Prophet's successor is not limited to this verse. Rather, throughout his twenty-three years of prophethood, the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) repeatedly raised the matter of 'Alī's (a.s.) succession, with the first instance being the Hadith of the Day of the House (*ḥadīth yawm al-dār*).

After three years of secret and private preaching, the Prophet (s.a.w.) began to preach openly and publicly. As his first step, he invited the chiefs of Quraysh to a feast, and after the meal, he presented his mission and concluded by saying:

"Which of you will support me in this matter?"

No one except 'Alī gave an affirmative response, and in that same gathering the Prophet declared:

"You are my successor (*waṣī*)."

While the Prophet was still alive, why would he need a successor (*waṣī*)?

The conclusion is that such objections, which have clear answers, are in fact mere excuses!

The Seventh Objection: What is Meant by Alms?

As previously discussed, various excuses have been made regarding the meaning of the verse of authority (*wilāya*), to the extent that they have questioned every word of this verse: "indeed" (*innamā*), "authority" (*walī*), "those who bow" (*rāki'ūn*), and "alms" (*zakāt*) have all been subject to questions and objections.

Fakhr al-Rāzī and others have asked: What type of alms is meant in this noble verse?

Is it voluntary alms or obligatory alms? Since there is no such thing as voluntary alms, it must therefore refer to obligatory alms. If obligatory alms is meant, and we say the verse refers to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), we encounter a contradiction, because 'Alī was not in such a financial position that obligatory alms would be required of him. According to what has been said regarding the occasion of revelation of *Sūrat al-Insān* (also called *Sūrat al-Dahr*), when 'Alī and his family were fasting and a beggar came to their door, they gave their evening meal to the needy person and had nothing else to break their fast with except water. In short, how could 'Alī, who did not have more than one night's meal to spare, have been subject to obligatory alms such that he could give it while bowing?

Response: In answer to this objection, or more accurately this excuse, we say:

First: In Islam, we have both obligatory alms and voluntary alms. The collection of alms was implemented after the Prophet's (s.a.w.) migration to Medina. However, alms is mentioned in the Meccan chapters as well, where God encourages people to give alms. This must refer to either voluntary alms or to obligatory alms that were

not being collected at that time since an Islamic government had not yet been established.

Consider these three examples from verses revealed in Mecca:

In the fourth verse of *Sūrat al-Mu'minūn*, which is a Meccan chapter, we read:

"And those who pay alms" [23:4]

In this verse, paying alms is mentioned as one of the qualities of the believers. Since this chapter is Meccan and this verse was revealed before the legislation of obligatory alms, we understand that voluntary alms is meant.

In the third verse of *Sūrat al-Naml*, which describes the believers, we read:

"those who maintain the prayer and pay the alms, and who are certain of the Hereafter" [27:3]

Sūrat al-Naml is also among the Meccan chapters, therefore the alms mentioned in the above verse refers to voluntary alms.

In verse 39 of *Sūrat al-Rūm* we read:

"That which you give in usury in order that it may increase people's wealth does not increase with God. But what you pay as alms seeking God's pleasure—it is they who will be given a manifold increase" [30:39]

This chapter is also Meccan, and the alms mentioned in the above verse refers to voluntary alms.

Therefore, according to what we understand from the Qur'an, we have both obligatory alms and voluntary alms, just as in Shi'i jurisprudence some types of goods are subject to obligatory alms while alms on other types of goods is voluntary.

Secondly: Comparing the economic situation of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) at the time of the revelation of the verse of authority (*wilāya*), which was revealed near the end of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) life, with the time of the revelation of the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr* is not a valid comparison. This is because the situation of Muslims in the early days of Islam in Mecca was generally not favorable, and the economic condition of most Muslims was difficult, especially in Mecca where they were under economic siege. However, as time passed under

Islam, their financial situation gradually improved. When they migrated to Medina and were freed from the economic blockade of the Meccan polytheists, and furthermore engaged in agriculture and trade, their lives saw an improvement. With the influx of war spoils, their lives became even more prosperous, such that by the end of the blessed life of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), the economic condition of most Muslims was good. Given that the verses of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida* were revealed near the end of the Prophet's life, it was not unlikely for obligatory alms to apply to Ali (a.s.), and one should not compare his financial situation at this time, when most Muslims were financially well-off, with the time of the revelation of *Sūrat al-Insān* (early migration according to Shi'i belief, or before migration according to some Sunni scholars) when most Muslims were living in hardship. This is because, as the scholarly saying goes, for a contradiction to exist, eight conditions of unity must be met, among which are unity of place and unity of time, both of which are absent in this discussion.

Moreover, regarding the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), it is reported in traditions that: "He freed a thousand slaves through his own labor" [25]

It is clear that during his caliphate, he did not have the opportunity for economic activities to free this many slaves through his own labor, so he must have accomplished this great deed before his caliphate and assumption of government.

Therefore, the giving of a ring by Ali (a.s.), even as obligatory alms, is not a strange or unexpected matter.

Those who make excuses have fallen into clear contradiction. In one place, they object to Ali's (a.s.) alms on the grounds that it was a very valuable ring and constitutes extravagance, while in another place, they doubt the very occurrence of this act due to Ali's (a.s.) supposed lack of financial ability!

Therefore, despite the numerous objections and excuses raised concerning the indication of the noble verse of authority (*wilāya*), the most important of which were mentioned above and their responses given, the verse's indication of authority is clear. The above verse establishes authority (*wilāya*), guardianship, imamate, and

leadership for three individuals: first God, then the Prophet (s.a.w.), and after him, the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.).

If such excuses, examples of which we have seen, were to be made about every verse of the Qur'an, even the clearest and strongest verses about monotheism would be questioned, and nothing would remain for reasoning! While we observe that these objections and excuses are not seen in the interpretation of other Qur'anic verses, they seem to only appear when interpreting verses related to *wilāya* and the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.)!

If you seek the reason for this double standard in dealing with Qur'anic verses, we must say that such people have not knelt in respect before the Qur'an and are not like students seeking to learn what the Qur'an says! Rather, they want to be masters over the Qur'an and wish to extract their own preconceptions from it! This is the same interpretation based on personal opinion that has been strongly condemned in Islamic traditions, and there are harsh and striking expressions regarding it.[26]

Dear readers! If we want to properly benefit from the Qur'an, the divine revelation, or the traditions of the infallibles (peace be upon them) and reach the truth, we must be students of the Qur'an and hadith, and accept whatever we understand from these two important and rich sources of Islamic knowledge, even if it goes against our desires. Otherwise, it will lead to interpretation based on personal opinion and its dire consequences, objections, excuses, and denial of very clear and obvious matters.

In a beautiful tradition, the fate and end result of these two approaches to the Qur'an is mentioned as follows: The Prophet of God (peace be upon him and his family) said:

Whoever places him before themselves, he will guide them to Paradise, and whoever places him behind themselves, he will drive them to the Fire [27]

Whoever makes the Qur'an their guide and leader (and kneels before it as a student), the Qur'an will guide them to Paradise, and whoever places themselves as a leader ahead of the Qur'an (and

imposes their own preconceptions upon it), it will drive them towards Hell.

Indeed, this narration is unsettling for those who engage in personal opinion-based exegesis (*tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*).

The Message of the Verse of Authority (*Wilāya*)

The noble verse under discussion, in addition to establishing the authority (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), contains an important message for his Shi'i followers, and indeed for all Muslims worldwide. And that is:

Ali (a.s.) did not become the guardian (*walī*) and leader of the believers, successor to the Final Prophet (s.a.w.), and worthy vicegerent of God by chance or coincidence. Rather, attaining this great station had certain prerequisites that are mentioned in the verse under discussion. Strong and deep-rooted faith, establishing prayer and maintaining the connection between oneself and one's Creator, giving charity (*zakāt*), and establishing relationships between oneself and other human beings - these are what caused Ali (a.s.) to become the Commander of the Faithful .[28]

Therefore, this noble verse tells the followers of Ali (a.s.): If you too wish to follow in Ali's (a.s.) footsteps, you must have strong and powerful faith and strive to preserve and strengthen it, deepen and strengthen your relationship with the merciful God ever more, never be negligent of prayer, and along with prayer, do not withhold from paying your financial obligations, such as charity (*zakāt*) and other dues. Especially in the blessed month of Ramadan, which is the month of awakening, consciousness, worship and self-development, one must make doubled efforts in these areas and take practical steps through reflection on the contents of the supplications that are recited in this precious month towards relieving the poverty and needs of the needy, healing and recovery of the sick, paying the debts of the indebted, seeking mercy and forgiveness for the deceased, removing the sorrows and grief of the afflicted, and freeing and liberating the imprisoned.

. . .

1. The late ʿAllāma Amīnī in his valuable work, *al-Ghadīr*, 1/362, has quoted these twenty-seven possibilities.

2. Although the longest verse of the Qurʾān is about writing debt documents and interest-free loans (*qarḍ al-ḥasana*), unfortunately this ruling has been abandoned among Muslims, and due to abandoning this tradition, many problems and difficulties have arisen.

3. When the narrations regarding an issue are so numerous that one becomes certain of their content, such narrations are called "successive" (*mutawātir*), and there is no need to examine the chain of narrators for such traditions.

4. The economic situation of Muslims during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.) was not favorable, and most Muslims lived in hardship and difficulty, even struggling with basic life necessities.

5. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12/26.

6. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12/26.

7. Qurʾān, 20:25-32.

8. Qurʾān, 28:35.

9. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12/26.

10. There is no doubt that questioning and inquiry are the gateway to knowledge and learning, and the key to solving problems and unknowns. For this reason, in two Qurʾānic verses, there is an absolute command to question and investigate. Allah says in Qurʾān, 16:43 and 21:7: "Ask the people of remembrance if you do not know." This noble verse is absolute in every respect, meaning anyone who has any question can ask the experts about it. There are many traditions regarding this matter. However, what is important is that the question should be asked with the intention of understanding the truth and receiving an answer, not out of obstinacy and prejudice, like many of the above questions posed by Sunni scholars regarding the verse of *wilāya*.

11. Zamakhsharī in *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, 1/649, has admitted that this was not a frequent occurrence.

12. We have included the detailed account of this incident with its

sources and documentation in the book *110 Dāstān az Zindagānī-yi Imām 'Alī* (a.s.).

13. In a tradition from Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.), it is stated: "The poor person is God's messenger to you. Whoever rejects him has rejected God, and whoever gives him something, it is as if they have given it to God!" (*Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 6/Abwāb al-Ṣadaqa/Chapter 23/Hadith 11).

14. There are many traditions regarding the virtue and effects of charity (*ṣadaqa*) and helping the needy. Among them is a tradition from Imam al-Bāqir (a.s.) which reads: "I prefer performing one Hajj over freeing seventy slaves, and helping a needy Muslim family, feeding them, clothing them, and preserving their dignity is more valuable to me than seventy Hajj." (*Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 6/Abwāb al-Ṣadaqa/Chapter 2/Hadith 3).

15. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12/28

16. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 6/167

17. *Al-Kashshāf*, 1/257

18. *Al-Kashshāf*, 1/319

19. *Al-Kashshāf*, 1/368

20. *Al-Kashshāf*, 4/511

21. *Al-Kashshāf*, 1/643

22. For a detailed explanation of this story, please refer to *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 24/156

23. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12/28

24. Qur'ān, 19:5-6

25. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 41/43

26. For detailed discussions on interpretation by personal opinion (*tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*), please refer to the book *Tafsīr bi-l-Ra'y* written by Grand Ayatollah Makārim Shīrāzī (may his shadow be extended)

27. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 74/134

28. As we seminary students say: "Attributing a ruling to a characteristic indicates causality" meaning if a ruling is given for a specific characteristic, it implies that characteristic is the cause of that ruling. For example, if it is said "Respect knowledgeable people," it means their knowledge is the reason for respecting them.

4

OBEY GOD AND OBEY THE MESSENGER AND THOSE VESTED WITH AUTHORITY...

"O you who have faith! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you have faith in God and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome."

(*Sūrat al-Nisā'*, verse 59)

Overview of the Discussion

The above verse - which is also known as the "verse of obedience" (*āyat al-iṭā'a*) - is another one of the verses that clearly indicates the leadership of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), and the main point of discussion in this verse is the phrase "those vested with authority" (*ulī l-amr*), about which various views have been presented; the explanation, exegesis and critique of these views will follow.

Explanation and Exegesis

"O you who have faith! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority among you."

"And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you have faith in God and the Last Day."

"That is better and more favourable in outcome."

First is obedience to God, then obedience to His Messenger, and third is obedience to those vested with authority (*ulī l-amr*).

Given that the condition of faith in God and the Last Day is mentioned, it becomes clear that Muslims who refer their disputes to non-Islamic sources and courts do not have faith in God and the Last Day.

Another noteworthy point is that: at the beginning of the verse, among those whose obedience is deemed obligatory, we find mention of those vested with authority (*ulī l-amr*); however, in the latter part of the verse, which determines the reference point for disputes and judgment, those vested with authority are not mentioned. This matter is one of the important questions raised in the exegesis of this noble verse, and God willing, we will discuss it in future discussions.

Why must the believers obey God, the Messenger, and those vested with authority?

Why should they not choose arbiters other than God and His Messenger in disputes and disagreements?

For this is better for the believers and more favourable in outcome and conclusion.

The Scope of Obedience to Those Vested with Authority

The main complexity of the verse and its ambiguous point lies in the above phrase. If it becomes clear who is meant by those vested with authority (*ulī l-amr*), the exegesis of the verse will become clear and evident. For this reason, exegetes have discussed the referent of those vested with authority and have presented various views, amounting to seven different perspectives.

Question: Before addressing the exegetes' views regarding the meaning of those vested with authority (*ulī l-amr*), the answer to one question, which greatly affects the understanding of "those vested with authority" (*ulī l-amr*), must be clarified: Is obedience to those

vested with authority restricted by conditions and prerequisites, or is obedience to them absolutely obligatory like obedience to God and His Messenger? In other words, is obedience to those vested with authority limited in terms of time, place, and other factors, or is it necessary at all times, places, and under all conditions?

Answer: The apparent meaning of the verse indicates that obedience to those vested with authority is absolute and is not restricted by any condition or prerequisite. In other words, obedience to those vested with authority in this verse is not contingent upon their freedom from error and mistake. Put another way, just as obedience to God and His Messenger is deemed absolutely obligatory, obedience to those vested with authority, which is placed alongside them, is also absolutely obligatory. Therefore, those vested with authority must necessarily be infallible (*ma ʿṣūm*), because unconditional obedience is only possible to one who is infallible, as it is impossible to obey unconditionally someone who makes errors and mistakes. For this reason, we believe that if a judge errs in issuing a ruling and the litigant is certain of the judge's error in issuing the ruling, the beneficiary cannot consider themselves entitled based merely on his ruling and cannot consider their opponent condemned.

Even religious authorities (*marāji ʿ taqlīd*), whose guidance their followers must adhere to, cannot be followed if they make a mistake in a particular matter. For example, if the sighting of the moon is not established for a religious authority on the thirtieth night of the blessed month of Ramadan, and he rules that people should fast on the thirtieth day, but some of his followers see the moon of Shawwal with their own eyes on the thirtieth night, in this case these followers cannot follow their religious authority and fast. Rather, they must break their fast, because they believe their religious authority has erred in this matter.

Therefore, absolute and unquestioning obedience is only permissible to the infallibles (*ma ʿṣūmīn*) and is not permissible to anyone else. Since God has made obedience to those vested with authority (*ulī l-amr*) absolutely obligatory, we conclude that those vested with authority must be infallible.

Different Views Concerning Those Vested with Authority

Regarding the exegesis (*tafsīr*) of those vested with authority (*ulī l-amr*) - as mentioned before - there are various views, of which we will mention a few examples:

1- Those vested with authority refers to the rulers of society - whoever becomes the ruler of Islamic society in whatever way and takes control of Muslim affairs becomes "one vested with authority" (*ulī l-amr*) and must be obeyed unconditionally, even if they come to power by force of the sword without the will and consent of the people, and even if they are the most corrupt individuals! Therefore, even the likes of the Mongols and Genghis Khan must be obeyed if they gain control over Islamic society!

A considerable number of Sunni scholars support this view.

But can any sound intellect accept such a statement?

Did God not send His Prophet (s.a.w.) to establish justice and uphold equity ?[1] How then can an oppressive person become the successor of the Prophet and burn the roots of justice and equity?

How can such an exegesis of those vested with authority be compatible with any of Islam's constructive and hopeful programs? Do the proponents of this view truly believe that if an oppressive ruler takes control of Islamic society by force of the sword, tramples all Islamic values, makes evil deeds public, eliminates what is good, and openly violates divine obligations, we must view such an oppressive, deviant, and unbelieving person as one vested with authority and the Prophet's successor, and obey them unconditionally?!

Unfortunately, these scholars answer in the affirmative and have considered corrupt and oppressive individuals like Mu'āwiya and his son to be among those vested with authority!

If only none of the Muslim scholars had offered such an exegesis of this verse.

2- Some other exegetes have rejected the above view and believe in the infallibility (*'iṣma*) of those vested with authority (*ulī l-amr*). Since humans are generally prone to error and not infallible, they argue that those vested with authority refers to "the entire Islamic

community." It is clear that "the Islamic community" (*ummat*) is infallible and it is impossible for all Muslims to err, even though individual members of society may err!

Therefore, just as obedience to God and His Messenger (s.a.w.) is necessary, following the Islamic community is also obligatory!

However, in response to this theory we say: How can one obtain the collective opinion of the Islamic community on an issue? Is it not necessary to obtain the views and opinions of the entire Islamic community? If it is said that the opinion of individual Muslims is not necessary, but rather that Muslims elect representatives and the agreement and consensus of the representatives of the Islamic community is sufficient.

We say: Is it possible to obtain unanimous agreement, even from the representatives of the Islamic community (let alone all Muslims)?

Generally, obtaining unanimous agreement even from the representatives of the Islamic community is not possible. If it is said that unanimous agreement is not necessary, but rather the criterion is majority rule - whenever the majority of representatives of the Islamic community vote positively on an issue, following them as those vested with authority becomes necessary!

Is the true meaning of those vested with authority really the majority of representatives of the Islamic community?

3- Some have gone even further and, due to being overwhelmed by foreign cultures, have considered Western democracy to be an instance of those vested with authority!

Are not such views and exegeses a case of personal opinion-based exegesis (*tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*)? Are these not preconceptions being imposed upon the Qur'an? Are these interpretations not doing injustice to the Qur'an?

Beyond all this, Western democracy is not such an impressive achievement! They themselves admit that it is not ideal and have only taken refuge in it out of necessity and desperation. In the current circumstances, if they had not taken refuge in Western democracy, they would have faced something worse. They implemented it based on choosing "the lesser of two evils" (*aqall al-*

ḍararayn). Otherwise, what rational person would accept that out of 100% of a country's population, 50% participate in elections, with 26% voting for one person and 24% for another, and then the candidate chosen by 26% of the people becomes ruler over 100% of the people! Is this justice?!

Those who have lost themselves in admiration of Western democracy consider America the cradle of this system. Fortunately, with the recent scandal and disgrace that occurred during the American elections, the true nature of this type of democracy has become clear and evident to everyone. Those who run their entire industry, administration, and country with computer systems are disputing over whether to count ten to fifteen thousand ballots by hand or by computer! What is the meaning of this dispute! A task that would be completed in one day regardless of how it is done has generated so much dispute, discussion, and disagreement that it has deafened the ears of the world!

Such matters demonstrate the lack of trust that the proponents of democracy have in themselves and their own industries!

The world should laugh at this democracy and these elections! Researchers should examine this incident meticulously so that the true nature of those who claim democracy becomes clearer to everyone, especially to those who consider it their ultimate aspiration. Indeed, interpreting "those vested with authority" (*ulū l-amr*) as democracy contradicts the apparent meaning of the noble verse, and is rather a great injustice to the Qur'an.

4- The view of all Shi'i scholars is that those vested with authority must be infallible and cannot be more than one person in any era or time. That person during the time of the noble Prophet (s.a.w.) was the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), and after him the eleven Imams (a.s.).

Further explanation: A- As mentioned before, those vested with authority, according to the noble verse (which commands obedience to God, the Messenger, and those vested with authority in absolute terms), must be infallible so that they can be followed absolutely and without question.

In other words, those vested with authority must be someone who is immune to error, sin, and mistake. To put it differently, infallibility (*'iṣma*) is a spiritual power and elevated piety that prevents the infallible person from committing sin and falling into error or mistake, although they have free will and are not compelled, and could theoretically commit error and sin, but due to the blessing of that elevated piety, they do not commit such acts.

And in a third explanation, piety (*taqwā*) has different levels. One level is avoiding major sins, such that if one happens to commit them, one immediately repents. At another level, in addition to not committing major sins, one also avoids and abstains from minor sins, and if committed, one repents. The third level, which is higher than the previous two, is that in addition to abandoning major and minor sins, one does not even commit disliked acts (*makrūhāt*). The levels of piety continue to rise in this way until reaching its peak, which is absolute infallibility from sins, errors, and mistakes. Therefore, infallibility, contrary to what some have supposed, is not a form of compulsion, but rather the highest level of piety.

B- The infallible one vested with authority - as previously explained - cannot be the entire Muslim community, or their scholars and thinkers as representatives of the Muslim community, or their majority. Rather, it must be a specific and designated individual.

C- Since infallibility is a spiritual power and the highest level of piety, and this criterion cannot be discerned by ordinary humans and the general public, the infallible one vested with authority must be introduced by God, or the Prophet (s.a.w.), or another infallible person whose infallibility has been established.

The conclusion is that: First, those vested with authority must be infallible; second, they must be specific and designated individuals; and third, the appointment of the infallible one and those vested with authority must be from God.

*** Here we must proceed to the second part of the discussion, namely the narrations regarding the occasion of revelation of the verse, to see whether the narrations have specified the instance of

those vested with authority, and whether God or the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) has designated such an infallible person.

Exegesis of the Verse in Light of Narrations

There are various narrations identifying the infallible person referred to in the verse "O you who have faith! Obey Allah..." The most important among these is the "Hadith of the Two Weighty Things" (*Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn*).

According to this hadith, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said in the final days of his noble life:

"Indeed, I leave among you two weighty things (*thaqalayn*). As long as you hold fast to them both, you will never go astray after me..."

"The Book of God... and my progeny, my household"[2]

The meaning of this hadith is that since the Qur'an is protected from error and mistake, whoever follows its guidance is protected from error. Therefore, the Household must also be infallible and protected from error and mistake, so that those who hold fast to them will also be protected from error. Otherwise, it would be meaningless for the Household not to be infallible while those who follow them are protected from error.

Thus, according to this narration, the pure and infallible Household are indeed infallible, and as we explained in the exegesis of the verse "Obey God...", those in authority must be infallible individuals chosen by God. Therefore, these must be the infallible Imams (a.s.), one after another.

The Importance of the Hadith of the Two Weighty Things

The Hadith of the Two Weighty Things (*Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn*) is among the most important hadiths concerning leadership (*wilāya*) and imamate, being either unique or having very few parallels. This hadith is very strong and clear in its meaning, and in terms of its chain of transmission, it is widely transmitted (*mutawātir*) and exten-

sively recorded in both general and specific sources (Sunni and Shi'i). From the collection of sources for this narration, it is evident that the Prophet (s.a.w.) stated this hadith not just once, but multiple times. This narration appears in the primary and authoritative Shi'i sources (*al-Tahdhīb al-Akhbār*, *al-Istibṣār*, *al-Kāfī*, and *Man lā Yaḥḍuruhu l-Faqīh*[3]) and Sunni sources, namely the Six Sound Collections (*Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta*). The Six Sound Collections consist of:

1- *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*
2- *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*
3- *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*
4- *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*
5- *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*
6- *Sunan Ibn Māja*

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Yazīd ibn Ḥayyān says: Along with Ḥuṣayn ibn Sabra and 'Umar ibn Muslim, we went to visit the well-known companion of the Prophet, Zayd ibn Arqam. When we sat with him, Ḥuṣayn said to him: "O Zayd ibn Arqam! You have attained great honors - you visited the Prophet (s.a.w.), heard Hadith from him, fought alongside him, and prayed behind him. These are truly great distinctions! Now, tell us a Hadith that you heard from the Prophet (s.a.w.)."

Zayd ibn Arqam said: "I have grown old, and due to aging, I have forgotten some of what I heard from him." Then he narrated this Hadith for us:

One day, the Prophet (s.a.w.) delivered a sermon at Ghadīr Khum, and after praising God and offering some advice and reminders, he said:

"O people! I am but a human being, and soon the messenger of my Lord will come and I will answer [his call]. I am leaving among you two weighty things (*thaqalayn*). The first of them is the Book of God, in which there is guidance and light, so take hold of the Book of God and adhere to it." He emphasized and encouraged [adherence to]

the Book of God, then said: "And [the second is] my household (*ahl baytī*). I remind you of God regarding my household..."

Zayd continues: The Prophet encouraged and urged people regarding the Book of God, and then said:

"And the second thing I leave among you is my household."

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Then he said three times:

"Remember God regarding my household."[10]

In addition to the three books mentioned above, this narration is also found in *Khaṣā'iṣ* of al-Nasā'ī.[11] Interestingly, Ibn Ḥajar, who was a highly partisan man and wrote a book against the Shi'i called *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqa* containing many arguments against the Shi'i, has also narrated this tradition![12]

Even more interesting is that Ibn Taymiyya, the founder of the deviant Wahhābī sect, has also narrated the Hadith of *Thaqalayn* in his book *Minhāj al-Sunna*![13]

In summary, the beautiful and meaningful Hadith of *Thaqalayn* is a widely transmitted (*mutawātir*) tradition that has been extensively narrated in both Shi'i and Sunni books.[14]

This shows that this narration holds special and particular importance, which is why Imam Khomeini began his historical testament with this noble Hadith; for he was a master of discourse and knew that this Hadith was a firm tradition that left no room for any doubt or uncertainty.

Through the Hadith of *Thaqalayn*, it is proven that the people of authority (*ulū l-amr*) are the Pure Imams (a.s.), each of whom was to be unconditionally obeyed in their time, and following them was necessary without any qualification.

In addition to the Hadith of *Thaqalayn*, we have other specific traditions that were revealed regarding the meaning of this noble verse.

Here we will suffice with two examples:

1- Shaykh Sulaymān Ḥanafī Qundūzī writes in *Yanābī' al-Mawadda*, page 116:

Someone asked Imam Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.): "What is the least thing that takes a person off the right path and places them among the misguided?" The Imam replied: "It is forgetting the Divine Proof and not obeying him. Whoever does not obey the Divine Proof is misguided."

The person asked again: "Please explain further, who is this Divine Proof you mentioned?"

The Imam said: "The one who is referred to as those vested with authority (*ulū l-amr*) in verse 59 of *Sūrat al-Nisā'*."

The questioner asked for a third time: "Who is the one vested with authority? Please explain more clearly."

The Imam replied: "The one about whom the Prophet (s.a.w.) repeatedly said:

'I am leaving among you two things; you will never go astray after me if you hold fast to them: the Book of God and my household, the people of my family.'"

The Proof is the one mentioned in this Hadith, and the one vested with authority is the one discussed in this narration.

This narration clearly shows the connection between the Hadith of *Thaqalayn* and those vested with authority (*ulū l-amr*).

2- Abū Bakr Mu'min Shīrāzī narrates from Ibn 'Abbās: When the Prophet (s.a.w.) was about to depart for the Battle of Tabūk, he decided to leave Ali (a.s.) in Medina as his successor and go to the battlefield of Tabūk with the rest of the Muslims.[15] Ali (a.s.) (though he knew the Prophet's (s.a.w.) reason for this decision, but to prevent the hypocrites' negative propaganda) said to the Prophet: "Are you leaving me in Medina with the women and children, depriving me of the merit of this great jihad while you go to war with the other Muslims!"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) replied:

"Are you not satisfied to be to me as Aaron was to Moses, when he said: 'Be my successor among my people and set things right'?" And God says: "and those vested with authority among you."[16]

This means that the verse about those vested with authority (*ulū l-amr*) refers to your role, and you are the one vested with authority.

The conclusion is that this noble verse, even without considering the narrations, indicates that the one vested with authority must be a specific, infallible person appointed by God. Through the narrations, we understand that this specific person appointed by God refers to the twelve Shi'i Imams, namely Ali (a.s.) and his eleven descendants.

Questions and Answers

Various questions have been raised about this noble verse, of which the three most important ones are as follows. Consider these questions and their answers:

First Question: If Ali (a.s.) is an instance of those vested with authority (*ulū l-amr*), as the Shi'i believe, then why was obedience to him not obligatory during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.), even though the noble verse makes obedience to those vested with authority as necessary as obedience to God and His Messenger?

In other words, Ali (a.s.) during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.) was himself one who followed orders rather than one who gave them, and was not someone whose obedience was obligatory upon Muslims. Therefore, the above exegesis does not accord with the actuality of obligatory obedience to those vested with authority.

Answer: This objection can be addressed in two ways:

A- First, we should consider the meaning of "Messenger" (*rasūl*) and "those vested with authority" (*ulū l-amr*). If we understand the difference between these two terms, the answer to the above question becomes clear. A "Messenger" (*rasūl*) is one who has been sent by God to explain rulings, convey religion, and warn people; that is, in addition to prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and conveying rulings, he also has the duty of warning and alerting people. In simple and clear terms, the Messenger is responsible for explaining rulings and conveying them.

However, those vested with authority (*ulū l-amr*) do not have the duty of legislation, rather their duty is to protect the law and imple-

ment it. In a clear and simple expression, we can compare the "Prophet" to a "legislator" and those "vested with authority" to "executors of the law."

With this explanation, during the time of the Prophet, he himself was the legislator. And the executor and protector of the law was also the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself. Therefore, during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam, he himself was both the "Messenger" (*rasūl*) and one "vested with authority" (*ulū l-amr*), just as we read in the Qur'an about Abraham (a.s.), that great prophet (*ulū l-ʿazm*), who was also appointed to the position of leadership (*imāma*); meaning that in addition to legislation, he was also given the duty of executing the law. Thus, the position of messengership is the position of legislation, and the position of leadership and those vested with authority is the position of executing the law. During the lifetime of the Prophet (s.a.w.), he himself was both "Messenger" and "vested with authority," but after the Prophet's (s.a.w.) passing, the infallible person appointed by God and His Messenger would be vested with authority, and that person was none other than Ali (a.s.) and after him the other infallible Imams (a.s.) one after another, because no claim of divine appointment has been made for anyone other than Ali and his children (a.s.).

The result is that the claim of actual obedience does not harm the application of those vested with authority to Ali (a.s.) after the Prophet's (s.a.w.) passing and to his children after Ali's (a.s.) passing, as was also understood from the traditions.

B- Another answer is that Ali (a.s.) was also vested with authority during the Prophet's (s.a.w.) time, at least for a period, and that was during the Prophet's (s.a.w.) departure for the Battle of Tabūk when Ali (a.s.) remained in Medina as the successor of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). To clarify this matter, a brief explanation about the Battle of Tabūk is necessary:

The Battle of Tabūk

The Battle of Tabūk was the last military campaign that the Prophet (s.a.w.) undertook during his mission and in the final years of his life. This battle took place at the northernmost point of the Hijaz, which was considered the shared border between the Hijaz and the Eastern Roman Empire.

When Islam began to expand and strengthen its foundations in Medina, and its fame spread throughout the world, the neighbors of the Islamic state, including the Eastern Roman Empire which ruled over the Levant (Palestine and Syria), felt threatened and began contemplating an attack on the Muslims to prevent Islam's influence from spreading into their territory, which threatened their crown, throne, and government.[17] For this purpose, they mobilized forty thousand fully equipped and prepared soldiers and moved towards the Hijaz.

This news reached the Muslims and the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) himself. The Prophet (s.a.w.) encouraged the Muslims to go forth to meet the enemy, rather than sitting in Medina waiting for the enemy to attack them. This was a good military tactic, for it is not correct to take a defensive and passive stance; rather, in the face of enemy aggression, one must take the offensive.

Coincidentally, the timing of this battle was not favorable. On one hand, there was the scorching heat of Arabia, and on the other hand, it was summer when the previous year's food stores of the Muslims had been depleted and the new food supplies had not yet been harvested. Furthermore, the distance between Medina and Tabūk was considerable, and the Muslims had to travel this route on foot since there was only one mount for every ten people, requiring them to take turns riding. Nevertheless, the order to prepare was issued, and the remnants of food stores were gathered, which consisted of nothing but some dried and occasionally spoiled dates. The Muslim army of thirty thousand, under the command of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), marched towards Tabūk. Thirst and hunger afflicted the Islamic forces, and some soldiers' feet were blistered from walking,

but they continued their journey despite all difficulties. The Islamic army faced so many hardships during their journey and return that their army became known as *Jaysh al-'Usra* ("the army of hardship").[18]

When the Romans learned that a Muslim army of thirty thousand had traversed the long distance from Medina to Tabūk with minimal provisions and mostly on foot, coming to face God's enemy with hearts full of love and faith, they decided to retreat. The Caesar, ruler of the Levant, ordered the withdrawal. When the Muslims reached Tabūk, they discovered the enemy's retreat and flight, and they thanked God for this success.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) consulted with the Muslims about whether to return from there or to pursue the enemy and engage them in the Levant. The outcome of this consultation was to return from there, since Islam was still young and lacked sufficient experience in conquering other countries. Under these circumstances, undertaking such an endeavor would have posed a great risk to the tender sapling of Islam.

Given what has been described, the Battle of Tabūk differed in various aspects from all the battles that took place during the Prophet's (s.a.w.) time - especially regarding the extended absence of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the Muslims, and the long distance between Medina and Tabūk. There was also the possibility of a coup by the hypocrites of Medina and conspiracies by enemies outside Medina. Therefore, in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) absence, the strongest individual among the Muslims needed to replace him and protect the capital of Islam against potential conspiracies, and that person could only be Ali (a.s.). Thus, the Prophet (s.a.w.) appointed Ali (a.s.) as his successor, and as mentioned in the narration of Abū Bakr Mu'min Shīrāzī, referred to him as *ulū l-amr* ("those vested with authority").

Therefore, Ali (a.s.) was *ulū l-amr* even during the Prophet's (s.a.w.) time, albeit temporarily, and obedience to him was obligatory for the Muslims of Medina, just like obedience to God and His Messenger. As a result, the objection regarding the immediacy of obedience in the noble verse has been addressed with two answers.

Second question: *Ulū l-amr* is plural while Ali (a.s.) is only one person. Does *ulū l-amr*, which is plural, refer only to Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.)?

While *ulū l-amr* is indeed plural, it does not refer only to Ali (a.s.), but rather includes all twelve Imams of the Shi'i tradition (a.s.), just as in the Hadith of Thaqalayn, the phrase "my family, the people of my household" (*'itratī ahl baytī*) is not limited to Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), but encompasses all the infallible Imams (a.s.).

Evidence for this can be found in the detailed narration we previously cited from *Yanābī' al-Mawadda*. In that narration, *ulū l-amr* was explained through what appears in the Hadith of Thaqalayn, and we mentioned that "my family, the people of my household" in the Hadith of Thaqalayn refers to all the infallible Imams (a.s.).

Therefore, *ulū l-amr* refers to all twelve Shi'i Imams, each of whom was *ulū l-amr* during his own time as Imam, and obedience to each was unconditionally obligatory upon everyone.

Third question: Why is *ulū l-amr* not repeated in the latter part of the verse, which establishes the authority for resolving disputes among Muslims, and why is it not mentioned as one of the sources for resolving disputes?

Answer: First, this objection does not apply only to the Shi'i position; the Sunnis must also address it, since they too face this issue regardless of how they explain *ulū l-amr*.

Second, the reason for not repeating *ulū l-amr* in the final part of the verse is the same as what was mentioned regarding the difference between "Messenger" and *ulū l-amr*: the "Messenger" is the one who conveys the rulings and legislates, while *ulū l-amr* implements the law. It is clear that if someone has doubt about any divine ruling, they should turn to the legislator, not the implementer of the law.

Therefore, this non-repetition is not a deficiency in the verse, but rather demonstrates the eloquence and rhetoric of the Qur'an.

An important point to note is that all the infallible Imams (a.s.) were implementers of Islamic laws, and when they explained any of Islam's rulings, they had received it from the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

In *Jāmi' Aḥādīth al-Shī'a*, volume one, page 183, there are narra-

tions indicating that the guiding Imams (a.s.) possessed all the narrations containing religious rulings from the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Therefore, *ulū l-amr* does not mean legislator, but rather implementer of the law, which is why it is not repeated in the latter part of the verse.

Messages of the Verse

1- The most important message of this verse is that a Muslim must be completely submissive to Islamic rulings and must follow the commands of God and His Prophet without question. They should not be selective in their practice, following only those commands that align with their preferences while being submissive to them, while refusing to submit to and practice what goes against their desires and whims. Such a person is definitely not a true and genuine Muslim.

The Qur'an has a beautiful expression about this. God says in verse 65 of *Sūrat al-Nisā'*:

"But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission."

This verse provides an excellent and precise criterion for determining the extent of one's submission. According to this verse, a true Muslim, after the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) makes a ruling or judgment, even if it goes against their interests, not only refrains from expressing displeasure but reaches such a degree of submission that they feel no dissatisfaction even in the depths of their heart! This means they are submissive to God in action, speech, and in their heart. If this is not the case, and they feel unhappy and dissatisfied in their heart about any Islamic ruling, they have not yet achieved true submission. A Muslim must love what the Beloved loves, not what their lower self desires!

Imam Ali (a.s.) says in a beautiful hadith:

"I will define Islam as no one has defined it before me: Islam is submission (*taslīm*), and submission is certainty (*yaqīn*), and certainty is affirmation (*taṣdīq*), and affirmation is acknowledgment (*iqrār*), and

acknowledgment is performance (*adā'*), and performance is action (*'amal*)."[19]

I will explain Islam to you in a way that no one before me has explained it: Islam is absolute and unquestioning submission to God's command (such that one's entire being is in submission), and submission means certainty (*yaqīn*) (for until a person has certainty about something, they cannot be in absolute submission to it, thus submission is dependent on certainty), and certainty is born of affirmation and knowledge (for without knowledge, certainty cannot be achieved), and affirmation and knowledge without acknowledgment have no value (for knowledge that remains hidden in the heart and is not shared has no value), and acknowledgment is the same as feeling responsibility (meaning acknowledgment and sharing of knowledge must be coupled with a sense of responsibility), and feeling responsibility is the same as action (for feeling responsibility without action has no meaning or purpose).

According to this beautiful narration, Islam begins and sprouts from the inner chamber of the human heart and passes through various stages until it culminates in action. This means that Islam without heartfelt belief and merely performing actions and worship is not sufficient, just as beliefs alone without performing worship and practical duties is also not sufficient. Therefore, Islam is a collection of beliefs and actions, both of which are necessary.

2- The word "command" (*amr*) has a positive connotation; power and strength are inherent in this word. This means that those in authority must speak from a position of power, strength, and sovereignty, not by pleading and begging people. This meaning is also present in "commanding" (*amr*) the good - commanding the good must also come from a position of power. However, it should be noted that acting from a position of strength and power does not conflict with being gentle and treating others with kindness, as evidenced by the well-known story of Imam Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (a.s.).

Consider this story:

A man from Damascus came to Medina at a time when Mu'āwiya's negative propaganda against Ali (a.s.) and his family was

rampant in Damascus. From schools and kindergartens to mosques, pulpits, and Friday prayers, Ali was spoken of negatively everywhere, and due to this propaganda, the general public had developed a strange hatred for Ali (a.s.). The man from Damascus saw someone in Medina walking with a group of people and asked someone, "Who is this person?" The response was, "He is Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.)." When the Syrian man learned that he was Ali's son (a.s.), as the saying goes, he opened his mouth and closed his eyes, and in extreme anger and hatred, hurled every insult he could think of at him. The Imam stood there listening to his insults! When the Syrian man finished speaking, the Imam (though he could have signaled to his companions to severely discipline him or even have him killed, did not do so despite being in a position of power, but instead) said to him: "From your appearance, it's clear that you're not from Medina and that you're a traveler without accommodation in this city. Come to our home and be our guest. Our door is open to strangers, we will host you, if you have debts, we will pay them off, if you have an enemy pursuing you, we will defend you, and if you seek forgiveness, we will pardon your mistakes!"

The Syrian man, who was burning with rage like a hot furnace, was completely cooled down by this divine and godly response from the Imam, as if cold water had been poured over him! He was transformed by this encounter (perhaps saying to himself: "God, is what I'm seeing in sleep or while awake? How can someone powerful enough to punish me for all these insults respond in such a manner?!")

The Syrian man said: "O son of God's Messenger! When I first saw you (due to the negative propaganda in Damascus), you were the worst person in my eyes! But now (after experiencing this unexpected kindness), you are the best person on earth to me!"[20] Dear readers! The distance between being the best person on earth and the worst person on earth is vast, but Imam Ḥasan (a.s.) bridged this great gap with a single proper encounter, appropriate commanding of good, and an open countenance.

We too must learn from this encounter and understand that our opponents fall into two categories:

1- Those who err and those who behave inappropriately due to poisonous and negative propaganda. This group should be guided with gentleness and softness, like the Syrian man who had become an enemy of the Prophet's family due to negative propaganda and had fallen into error, but was guided through the Imam's appropriate response.

2- The saboteurs, meaning those who knowingly and consciously oppose and show enmity. Tolerance, leniency, and accommodation are meaningless here; this is where decisive and powerful action is needed.

Recognizing and separating these two groups, and then dealing appropriately with each, is a precise, delicate, and necessary task.

O Lord! Grant us the blessing of complete submission to all Your commands, and make us successful in carrying out the important and sacred duty of commanding good and forbidding evil, in the way that Islam prescribes.

1. This matter is mentioned in Qur'ān, 57:25

2. *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, chapter 161, hadith 917.

3. The *Tahdhīb* and *Istibṣār* authored by Shaykh Ṭūsī (r.a.), and *al-Kāfī* authored by the late Kulaynī (r.a.), and *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* written by Shaykh Ṣadūq (r.a.), all three of whom are among the great pillars of the Shia. It should be noted that: when it is said these four books are reliable and primary Shia sources, this does not mean that all traditions mentioned in these books are reliable and authentic and need no investigation of their chains of transmission. Rather, it means that the majority of their traditions are reliable, which becomes clear after examining the chains of transmission.

4. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd says: I asked my teacher 'Abd al-Wahhāb: "Are all authentic and reliable traditions found in the six authentic collections (Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta), or are reliable traditions not limited to what is found in these books?" He said: "There are many other reliable

traditions that are not found in these books." I said: "Is the Prophetic tradition 'There is no sword except Dhū al-Fiqār and no hero except 'Alī' (which was revealed regarding 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.)) authentic and reliable?" He said: "Yes, it is authentic and reliable, and how many authentic traditions there are that are not found in the six authentic collections!"

5. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 5/662, hadith 3786 (as quoted in *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/64).

6. *Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 1/93 and 3/109.

7. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd says: I asked my teacher 'Abd al-Wahhāb: "Are all authentic and reliable traditions found in the six authentic collections (Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta), or are reliable traditions not limited to what is found in these books?" He said: "There are many other reliable traditions that are not found in these books." I said: "Is the Prophetic tradition 'There is no sword except Dhū al-Fiqār and no hero except 'Alī' (which was revealed regarding 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.)) authentic and reliable?" He said: "Yes, it is authentic and reliable, and how many authentic traditions there are that are not found in the six authentic collections!"

8. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 5/662, hadith 3786 (as quoted in *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/64).

9. *Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 1/93 and 3/109.

10. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4/1873.

11. *Khaṣā'iṣ Nasā'ī*, p. 20 (cited from *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/66).

12. *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqa*, p. 226, 'Abd al-Laṭīf Egypt edition (cited from *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/67).

13. *Minhāj al-Sunna*, 4/104 (cited from *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/69).

14. In addition to the above books, the Hadith of Thaqalayn (*ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*) can be found in other important Sunni books. For more details on this topic, please refer to *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/62 onwards and *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 4/438 onwards.

15. The reason why the Prophet (s.a.w.) left Ali (a.s.) in his place in Medina was that the battlefield of Tabuk was far from Medina, and there was a possibility that during the absence of the Prophet and the Muslims, the hypocrites who remained in Medina might collaborate

with hypocrites outside Medina and cause turmoil. Therefore, he appointed the strongest person in his community as his successor.

16. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/435.

17. The Hijaz region before Islam was not of any interest to world powers, as they neither felt threatened by its people nor saw any significant culture, civilization, or important economic resources there. Rather, they considered the population of Hijaz as semi-primitive people who were constantly in conflict and war with each other, and in this state, they posed no threat to them. Therefore, even if Hijaz was offered to the powerful countries of that time for free, they would not have wanted it, and for this reason, conquerors never approached Hijaz. However, with the emergence of Islam and the creation of unity and solidarity among Muslims, and the emergence of a new civilization and culture, enemies began to feel threatened.

18. Undoubtedly, if it were not for this steadfastness, perseverance, and endurance, Islam would not have reached us today. Therefore, we should not let go of Islam cheaply, as it was not obtained cheaply!

19. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Short Sayings, Saying 125.

20. *Muntahā al-Āmāl*, 1/417.

5

O YOU WHO HAVE FAITH! BE WARY OF GOD, AND BE WITH THE TRUTHFUL

"O you who have faith! Be wary of God, and be with the Truthful."
(*Sūrat al-Tawba*, verse 119)

Overview of the Discussion

The above verse has been named the Verse of the Truthful (*Ṣādiqīn*), and is one of the many verses concerning the authority (*wilāya*), leadership (*imāma*), and infallibility (*'iṣma*) of Ali (a.s.) and his eleven descendants (a.s.).

In this verse, God calls upon the believers to follow and obey the "Truthful" (*ṣādiqīn*). Who these Truthful ones are and what characteristics and qualities they possess will be discussed in the upcoming sections.

A Brief Introduction to *Sūrat al-Tawba*

A brief introduction to *Sūrat al-Tawba* seems necessary to understand the context in which the Verse of the Truthful was revealed. For this purpose, several points need to be explained:

A- The names of the chapter and the reason for its naming: This chapter has two opposing and contrasting names, "Repentance" (*Tawba*) and "Disavowal" (*Barā'a*).

It is called "*Barā'a*" because the chapter begins with the word "*barā'a*", and also because it contains the declaration of disavowal and renunciation from the polytheists, idolaters, and enemies of Islam.

This is why this chapter does not begin with "In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful" which is a sign of mercy, compassion, kindness, and tolerance.

As for why this chapter is called "*Tawba*", it is because many verses in this chapter call for repentance and return to God. That is, despite the fact that the chapter begins with a declaration of war, disavowal, and renunciation, and the atmosphere of the chapter is one of intense warfare and declaration of disavowal, verses about repentance appear extensively in it. For instance, after declaring disavowal from the polytheists, at the end of the fifth verse[1] of this chapter we read:

"But if they repent, and maintain the prayer and give the zakat, then let them alone. Indeed God is all-forgiving, all-merciful."

This means that even though these disbelievers and polytheists have plotted extensively against the Muslims and committed various crimes, if they repent and adhere to Islamic laws, their repentance should be accepted.

The reason for choosing these two opposing and contrasting names for this chapter, and the presence of numerous verses about repentance among verses declaring war, aversion, and disavowal, appears to be to clarify this point: that in Islam, the path of return is never closed to wrongdoers, even in war and similar situations. Islam does not seek revenge against anyone; rather, Islam's goal, even in wars, is to reform people. Therefore, if enemies repent even during war and demonstrate their repentance through action, Islam not only ceases war against them but also supports them.

In other words, from the combination of verses in this chapter

and the selection of these two names for it, we learn an important educational point, which is:

In education and training, both harshness and tolerance are necessary; if harshness is used everywhere, people will scatter and flee, and if tolerance and gentleness are used everywhere, wrong-doers and sinners will take advantage and boldly continue their evil deeds. However, the alternating use of both in their proper place eliminates these problems. Therefore, both "sting" and "honey," "severity" and "gentleness," "punishment" and "repentance" are necessary.

B- The time of revelation of the verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba*: The early verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba* were revealed at the end of the ninth year of the Hijra, that is, one year before the passing of the Prophet (s.a.w.). According to what the exegetes have written, the Prophet (s.a.w.) in this year, and based on these very verses, in an interesting incident [2] appointed Ali (a.s.) to announce four matters to the Muslims during the grand ceremonies of the pilgrimage:

1- First, that from the ninth year of the Hijra onward, no one has the right to perform the circumambulation while naked!

Question: Did people really perform circumambulation naked until that time, and why?

Answer: Yes, some men and even women would perform the circumambulation completely naked! This was because one of the superstitious beliefs of the polytheists and idol-worshippers was that if someone performed the circumambulation in their own clothes, they had to give those clothes to a poor person afterward as charity. Therefore, those who only had one set of clothes would borrow clothes from others for the circumambulation to avoid this ruling. Those who could not obtain borrowed clothes would perform the circumambulation completely naked to preserve their only set of clothes, so they wouldn't be forced to give away their only clothing to the poor afterward!

2- The polytheists and idol-worshippers no longer have the right to circumambulate the House of God!

Question: Doesn't Islam accept religious freedom? Then why does it prevent followers of other religions from performing circumambulation?

Answer: Religious freedom is valid; however, idol-worship is not considered a religion or faith, but rather a collection of baseless beliefs mixed with various superstitions.

3- Muslims will fulfill their treaties with the polytheists until the end of their term, but after that, they will not make new treaties with them nor renew existing ones.

4- Polytheists who do not have treaties with Muslims have a four-month grace period to correct their beliefs and abandon polytheism and idol-worship, otherwise the Muslims will fight against them.

In any case, the early verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba*, whose content we have referenced, were revealed at the end of the ninth year of the Hijra, and it is highly likely that the rest of the chapter, including the verse under discussion, was revealed in the tenth year of the Hijra, which was the final year of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) life.

Therefore, the "verse of the truthful ones" (*āyat al-ṣādiqīn*) was revealed near the end of the blessed life of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), preparing the ground for the guardianship (*wilāya*), Imamate (*imāma*), and caliphate (*khilāfa*) of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.).

Commentary and Exegesis

"O you who have faith! Be wary of God, and be with the Truthful" - In this verse, which addresses the believers and Muslims, God gives them two commands:

First, that Muslims should adopt divine consciousness (*taqwā*). A consciousness that is considered the highest capital. A consciousness that is the measure of nearness to God, such that the more elevated the degree of consciousness a wayfarer toward God possesses, the closer they become to God, and the less they possess, the further they become from God. In verse 13 of *Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt* we read:

"O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female,

and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most Godwary among you. Indeed God is all-knowing, all-aware."

A consciousness that in verse 63 of *Sūrat Maryam* is considered the permit for entering paradise:

"This is the paradise We will give as inheritance to those of Our servants who are Godwary."

Consciousness (*taqwā*), which from Islam's perspective holds such value, means that inner state of God-consciousness that controls a person against sin and requires no external controller.

The second command that God gives to the believers in this verse is: be with the truthful ones (*ṣādiqīn*).

Who are the Truthful Ones?

Question: Does the term "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) in this noble verse, whom Muslims are obligated to follow, refer to specific individuals, or does it refer to its literal meaning and keeping company with any truthful person?

Answer: We believe that the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) in this noble verse does not refer to any truthful person, but rather to specific individuals. There are two contextual indicators and proofs for this claim:

1- First, if "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) had a general meaning and specific individuals were not intended, it should have said: "be among the truthful ones" (*kūnū min al-ṣādiqīn*) rather than "be with the truthful ones" (*ma ʿa l-ṣādiqīn*), because everyone should be among the truthful, not merely accompany them. Therefore, since it says "be with the truthful ones" (*ma ʿa l-ṣādiqīn*) and following them has been made necessary, it becomes clear that specific and distinguished individuals are meant, whose following has been made obligatory.

2- The second evidence is that the apparent meaning of the verse shows this accompaniment and following is unconditional, and since following the truthful ones is unconditional, the truthful ones under discussion must have divine guarantee and be protected from error

and mistake, because if they were not infallible, Muslims could not always follow them, but rather at times of error, mistake, and sin, they would have to separate from them.

Therefore, since accompanying and following the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) is mentioned in an absolute manner, they must be specific individuals who are infallible from error and sin so that unconditional following of them becomes possible.

Therefore, either following and obeying the truthful ones (*ṣādiqīn*) must be absolute while the "truthful ones" are restricted to specific individuals, or the "truthful ones" must be absolute and include all truthful people while following them becomes restricted. Based on the two contextual indicators mentioned earlier, the first possibility is correct. Thus, the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) is restricted and refers to specific individuals, but following and accompanying those specific individuals is absolute.

The View of Sunni Scholars

Sunni exegetes have generally divided into two groups on this issue. Some of them have passed over this verse quite simply without much discussion of the term "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*)!

Others have raised various discussions and have even gone so far as to say that the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) must be infallible, since absolute obedience is only valid for the infallible. However, their preconceptions have not allowed them to reach the truth, and thus they have taken the path of fantasy!

Fakhr al-Rāzī is among the exegetes of the second group. In addition to believing that the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) must be infallible, he also believes that the verse is not restricted to the era and time of the Prophet (s.a.w.), but rather that in every era there exist "infallible truthful ones" whose obedience is obligatory.

However, when it comes to identifying who the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) are, he falls into preconceptions and personal interpretation, saying: "We cannot specify particular individuals for the truthful

ones, so we must interpret it as referring to the entire Muslim community." This means that if the Muslim community agrees on an issue and reaches consensus on a matter, everyone must follow it. Thus, according to Fakhr al-Rāzī, "be with the truthful ones" means "in every era and time, be with the collective Muslim community"!

However, we ask Fakhr al-Rāzī: Would this exegesis and understanding of yours have truly occurred to the companions and followers of the Prophet (s.a.w.) during his time and at the moment of the verse's revelation?! The issue of "consensus" (*ijmā'*) was only raised in the centuries after the first century, so how could "consensus of the community" have been derived from this verse at that time?!

Without doubt, this exegesis is incorrect, and the companions and followers of the Prophet (s.a.w.) understood the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) to refer to a specific group who possessed the station of infallibility.

Therefore, the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) are undoubtedly: First, they possess the station of infallibility and are protected from error, sin, and mistake.

Second, they exist in every era and time and are not restricted to the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Third: They are a specific and defined group.

The above three points can be derived from the noble verse itself - as explained in detail - ,[3] but the referent of the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) is not clear from the verse itself. Rather, we must derive it from the narrations.

Explaining the Verse of the Truthful Ones Through Another Verse of the Qur'an

If we adopt the position of a student before the Qur'an, avoid preconceptions, and reflect on the verses of this magnificent book, the Qur'an itself introduces the truthful ones to us in other verses. In verse 15 of *Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt*, God says in introducing the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*):

"The faithful are only those who have attained faith in God and

His Messenger and then have never doubted, and who wage jihad with their possessions and their persons in the way of God. It is they who are the truthful."

According to this noble verse, the "truthful ones" (*sādiqīn*), in addition to having faith in God and His Messenger - in other words, faith in the Origin and Prophethood, which all Muslims had - possessed two other characteristics that distinguished them from other Muslims:

1- First, after their faith in the Origin and Prophethood, they did not allow even a moment's doubt or uncertainty to enter their hearts, and they maintained this strong and firm faith throughout all stages of their lives.

2- Second, the aforementioned faith did not remain confined to the heart and tongue, but rather its effects manifested in action as well. For this reason, solely for the sake of God's satisfaction, not for other motives, they waged jihad with their wealth and their lives in God's way.

Now, considering these two important and rare characteristics, we must take up a lamp and search among the companions and followers of the Prophet (s.a.w.) to find the person who possesses these characteristics and is among the truthful ones (*ṣādiqīn*)!

Upon studying the history of early Islam, we arrive at this truth: the only person who possessed these characteristics was ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.); for ʿAlī's entire life was jihad with wealth and life, and he never doubted his faith, not even for the blink of an eye.

To prove the above claim, we will point to just three incidents from the various events of his life in which jihad with wealth and life, and ʿAlī's supreme and elevated faith surge forth:

1- The polytheists of Mecca devised and executed various plots to destroy the young and nascent religion of Islam, but they did not achieve their desired result from any of them, until in one satanic and dangerous plot, they approved a plan to assassinate and kill the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

For this purpose, and to ensure that the Prophet's (s.a.w.) tribe would not be able to execute any particular person in retaliation in

the future, it was decided that forty strong and brave swordsmen would storm his house on a dark night and carry out the aforementioned plan.

God informed His Prophet of this dangerous conspiracy through the messenger of revelation.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) had to migrate to Medina to escape this plot, but to prevent the enemy from noticing his absence, a brave and selfless person ready to face death had to sleep in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) bed on the appointed night. The Prophet (s.a.w.) chose ʿAlī (a.s.) for this task.

According to the narrations ,[4] the Prophet (s.a.w.) addressed Imam ʿAlī (a.s.) saying:

"I am commanded to go from Mecca to Medina; but forty armed men, representing forty Arab tribes, have surrounded my house to attack at dawn and kill me in my bed. Dear ʿAlī, are you prepared to sleep in my bed, so that I may depart for Medina?"

ʿAlī (a.s.), whose entire being was filled with love for the Prophet of God and who never doubted his faith for a moment, replied: "O Messenger of God (s.a.w.)! If I sleep in your bed, will you reach your destination safely?" This question is very significant; for ʿAlī (a.s.) does not ask about his own life, does not speak of his own fate, does not inquire about the dangers and calamities that might befall him on this perilous night; rather, he is only concerned with the safety of his beloved, the Prophet of God!

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Yes, in this case, I will depart safely." ʿAlī, as an affirmative response and in gratitude for the Prophet's (s.a.w.) safety, fell into prostration before God. And this was perhaps the first prostration of gratitude (*sajdat al-shukr*) in Islam.

Indeed, who among the Muslims do we know to be such a devoted lover of the Prophet?

We love this ʿAlī and submit to the school of such an Imam.

ʿAlī (a.s.) lay in the Prophet's bed, and the Prophet (s.a.w.) safely departed for Medina. At dawn, the armed enemies entered the Prophet's house. When ʿAlī (a.s.) heard their commotion, he emerged

from the bed. When they did not find the Prophet, they asked ʿAlī (a.s.): "Where is Muhammad (s.a.w.)?"

Without showing the slightest fear, ʿAlī (a.s.) replied: "Had you entrusted him to me that you now ask me of his whereabouts?!"

Humiliated by this bold youth's crushing response, they said: "He is a simple-minded youth who has been deceived by Muhammad!"

When ʿAlī heard this statement, which was both an insult to his beloved and an affront to himself, he spoke beautiful words that no one else could say about themselves! The young ʿAlī declared:

"God has given me such Intellect (*ʿaql*) that if it were divided among all the foolish and insane people of the world, they would become wise; and such strength that if it were divided among all the weak people of the world, they would become strong; and such courage that if it were divided among all the cowards of the world, they would become brave." [5]

With this crushing response, they left the Prophet's (s.a.w.) house in complete humiliation, having failed to find him.

If ʿAlī (a.s.) had harbored the slightest doubt concerning God or His Messenger, would he have been willing to risk his life in such a way?

2- In the Battle of Uḥud, when the enemy achieved a partial victory due to the worldliness of a group of Muslims, they engaged in psychological warfare in addition to exploiting the Muslims' negligence. The enemy commander, upon seeing the Prophet (s.a.w.) wounded on the battlefield, shouted loudly: "Muhammad has been killed!" Many people, and according to some accounts everyone, fled upon hearing these words. However, ʿAlī (a.s.), who had faith in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) statement about Islam's victory over disbelief and never doubted his faith for a moment, paid no attention to these words and continued fighting the enemy in hand-to-hand combat! Until he found the severely wounded body of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and, like a moth circling around a candle, he circled around the Prophet's presence and defended God's messenger. ʿAlī's (a.s.) courage, faith, and tremendous effort neutralized the enemy's psychological warfare, and the Muslims

realized that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was still alive. Consequently, some returned to the battlefield, and despite all its difficulties and hardships, the battle finally ended, and the enemy returned to Mecca, disappointed in their failure to destroy the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

In this battle, due to his bravery and numerous acts of combat, 'Alī sustained nearly 90 wounds! The Prophet (s.a.w.) sent two physicians and surgeons to treat 'Alī, but they soon returned and said: "O Messenger of God! 'Alī's wounds are so close together that attempting to stitch any one of them causes another wound to reopen!"

Shablanjī, the renowned Sunni scholar, writes in his book *Nūr al-Abṣār*: When 'Alī came to the Prophet (s.a.w.) after the Battle of Uḥud, he said: "During those difficult and tumultuous moments of hand-to-hand combat with the polytheists, I received sixteen extremely heavy blows, which caused me to fall to the ground four times! Each time, a luminous figure would lift me from the ground and say, 'Rise and defend the Messenger of God!' O Messenger of God! Who was that person?"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) replied: "May your eyes be brightened and blessed are you, for that was Gabriel, the Trustworthy!"[6]

Yes, as confirmed by the Qur'an: "Indeed those who say, 'Our Lord is God!' and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them, [saying,] 'Do not fear, nor be grieved! Receive the good news of the paradise which you have been promised.'"[7]

In summary, this incident demonstrates both 'Alī's (a.s.) utmost struggle with his wealth and life, and his strong and unwavering faith in God and the Prophet (s.a.w.), as well as the Qur'anic promises regarding Islam's ultimate victory over the polytheists. Therefore, he exemplifies the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) who possess these characteristics.

3- During the Battle of the Confederates, when the great Arab warrior 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd managed to cross the trench and loudly called for a challenger, no one except 'Alī (a.s.) responded positively. This happened three times, and each time, only 'Alī (a.s.) stood up to face him.

ʿAlī, with his strong faith and extraordinary courage, moved toward the enemy. The Prophet (s.a.w.) raised his hands in prayer for ʿAlī's victory. ʿAlī engaged in combat with ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wudd and ultimately, through the grace and favor of the Lord of the worlds, prevailed over the enemy.

ʿAlī (a.s.) sat upon his chest, but Ibn ʿAbd Wudd spat in ʿAlī's (a.s.) face and insulted him .[8] ʿAlī (a.s.) stood up and walked a few steps in the battlefield. The Muslims watching from afar were puzzled. The hero of the Battle of the Confederates returned after a few moments and severed the head of God's enemy.

When later asked about the reason for this pause, he said:

"He had insulted my mother and spat in my face, so I feared that if I struck him then, it would have been to satisfy my personal anger. So I left him until my anger subsided, then I killed him for the sake of God."[9]

The masterful Persian poet, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī, composed these verses about the above story:

"Learn sincerity of action from ʿAlī Know the Lion of God to be pure from deceit"

In battle, he gained the upper hand over a warrior Swiftly he raised his sword and rushed forth

He spat upon the face of ʿAlī The pride of every prophet and every guardian

He spat upon that face before which the moon Would prostrate itself in the place of prostration

At that moment, ʿAlī dropped his sword Showing hesitation in striking him

That warrior was amazed by this act By the display of pardon and mercy out of place

He said: "You raised your sharp sword against me Why did you cast it aside and leave me be?"

Then speaking in the voice of ʿAlī (a.s.), he says:

"I strike with my sword for the sake of Truth I am God's servant, not commanded by my self

I am the Lion of Truth, not the lion of passion My actions bear witness to my faith"[10]

Therefore, the signs of faith are evident throughout ʿAlī's (a.s.) life. As a result, through other verses of the Qur'an and with the help of historical accounts, it becomes clear that the meaning of "the truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) refers to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.).

The Truthful Ones in the Narrations

If we consider only the valuable narration of *Thaqalayn* and place that beautiful narration, which like a powerful and bright searchlight has illuminated the length of history, alongside this noble verse, the referent of "the truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) becomes clear. The truthful ones are those who are introduced in the narration of *Thaqalayn* as infallible individuals whose adherence prevents misguidance. Indeed, with reference to this narration, the People of the Household and the infallible Imams are "the truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*). In addition to the above narration, there are numerous other narrations concerning this noble verse. Consider these examples:

1- Five renowned Sunni scholars, whose names are listed below, have narrated in this regard: Suyūṭī ,[11] Khwārazmī ,[12] ʿAllāma Thaʿlabī ,[13] ʿAllāma Ganjī ,[14] and Ḥākim Ḥaskānī ,[15] all of whom have narrated from the Prophet's (s.a.w.) famous companion Ibn ʿAbbās, or Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī, that:

"Be with the truthful ones" (*kūnū maʿa l-ṣādiqīn*), meaning "be with ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib."

Some have used the phrase "he is ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib" or "it was revealed concerning ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib"[16] instead of the above expression, all of which convey the same m-

2- Ḥākim Ḥaskānī in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, in addition to the above narration, has also reported another narration from "ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar" who says:

"Be with the truthful ones," meaning "be with Muhammad and his household" .[17]

It is interesting that in this narration, the rest of the infallible Imams (a.s.) are also counted among the truthful ones.

3- Sulaym ibn Qays, whom 'Allāma Majlisī considers a reliable person in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, has narrated the following regarding the exegesis of "the truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*):

Salmān says: We were in the presence of the Prophet (s.a.w.) when the verse of the truthful ones was revealed. I asked the Prophet (s.a.w.): "Are the truthful ones general, or are specific individuals intended?"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "The address of the verse is general and all people are addressed, but the truthful ones are specific, and that is exclusively for my brother 'Alī (a.s.) and my successors until the Day of Resurrection."[18]

According to this narration, "the truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) are the infallible Imams (a.s.).

4- 'Allāma Ganjī in the book *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib* and Ibn al-Jawzī in *Tadhkira* say:

"The scholars of biography say its meaning is be with 'Alī and his household".[19]

According to this Hadith as well, "the truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) are the twelve Shi'i Imams (a.s.).

The Message of the Verse of the Truthful Ones

Among all the attributes and characteristics of the infallible ones (a.s.) - such as those who strive (*mujāhidīn*), worshippers (*'ābidīn*), those who bow and prostrate (*rāki'īn sājidīn*), those who stand (*qā'imīn*), those who fast (*ṣā'imīn*), ascetics (*zāhidīn*), scholars (*'ālimīn*), the God-fearing (*muttaqīn*), those who remember God (*dhākirīn*), the humble ones (*khāshi'īn*), and others - "the truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*) has been chosen. This selection tells us that "truthfulness and honesty" (*ṣidq wa rāstī*) plays an important role in human destiny (not just for Muslims). For this reason, in this noble verse, the Imams of guidance (a.s.) have been introduced with this attribute.

To understand the importance of this subject, consider these Hadiths from 'Alī (a.s.):

1- "Truthfulness is the pillar of Islam and the foundation of faith" [20]

If a building's pillar is removed, it collapses. If a Muslim lacks truthfulness and honesty, their Islam and faith are destroyed.

2- "Truthfulness is the strongest support of faith"[21]

Like the center pole of a tent which, if removed, causes the tent to collapse to the ground and not remain standing for even a moment.

3- "Truthfulness is the rectification of all things, and lying is the corruption of all things"[22]

Indeed, if everyone in a society were truthful - spouses at home, employees in offices, business partners in commerce, government officials in politics, students in schools, university students and seminary students in academic environments, and in short, all members of society in whatever position they occupy - if they all practiced truthfulness, undoubtedly many of society's current problems would be solved!

All misfortunes arise from a lack of truthfulness.

This principle holds true on a global and international scale as well. For example, if those who claim to champion human rights were truthful in using this appealing title, humanity would present a different face. But now that they have deviated from the path of truthfulness and think only of their own interests, oppression and blatant discrimination run rampant. For this reason, if an Israeli spy is put on trial somewhere in the world, their cry of human rights deafens the world's ears. However, if thousands of oppressed Palestinians are killed in the worst possible way, no voice or protest will be raised by these human rights claimants. Rather, astonishingly and regrettably, they rush to help the oppressor politically, economically, and militarily to oppress even more!

Well said by that master of the God-fearing and truthful ones who stated: "Deviation from the path of truthfulness corrupts and ruins everything."

The conclusion is that the verse of the "truthful ones" (*ṣādiqīn*)

delivers a message of truth and honesty to all Muslims, indeed to all human beings.

1. Rather, the issue of repentance was also discussed before this verse, in verse two.

2. Almost all exegetes and historians agree that when this chapter - or its first verses - was revealed, it nullified the treaties that the polytheists had with the Prophet (s.a.w.). To convey this command, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) first gave it to Abu Bakr to recite to the general public during Hajj in Mecca, then took it back and gave it to Ali (a.s.) who was appointed to convey it and announced it to all people during the Hajj ceremonies. For detailed account of this story and some historical facts that some try to conceal, refer to *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 7/275 onwards.

3. Those who have contemplated the above noble verse and similar verses without prejudice or preconception have reached good conclusions; among them is Dr. Tijani who was a Sunni scholar and was guided through careful and unbiased study of verses like the above. In response to those who asked him why he converted to Shiism, he wrote a book titled *Li-Akūn ma 'a al-Ṣādiqīn* (To Be with the Truthful). This book mainly discusses the "verse of the truthful ones."

4. The late Muḥaddith Qummi (may Allah have mercy on him) has mentioned the detailed account of this story in *Muntahā al-Āmāl*, 1/110.

5. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 19/83.

6. *Nūr al-Abṣār*, 97.

7. Qur'ān, 41:30.

8. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 21/26.

9. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 41/51 (quoted from *Maẓhar-i Wilāyat*, 365).

10. This poem is very long; you can read its full text in *Maẓhar-i Wilāyat*, 365.

11. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 3/290

12. Cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/298

13. *Tafsīr al-Tha 'labī*, cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/297
14. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, p. 111, cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/297
15. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/260
16. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/260
17. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/262
18. *Asrār Āl Muḥammad*, p. 297
19. Cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/297
20. *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, chapter 2190, hadith 10185
21. Ibid., hadith 10184
22. *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, chapter 2189, hadith 10166

PART II

VERSES ON THE VIRTUES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE HOUSEHOLD (A.S.)

6

INDEED GOD DESIRES TO REPEL ALL IMPURITY FROM YOU, O PEOPLE OF THE HOUSEHOLD...

"Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."
(*Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, verse 33)

Overview of the Discussion

The verse of purification is another verse concerning the authority (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) and the other infallible Imams (a.s.). This verse, each word of which merits study, contemplation, and reflection, also indicates the infallibility (*'iṣma*) of the pure Imams (a.s.).

Introduction

Verses 28 to 34 of *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* are all addressed to the wives of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and among these seven verses, the verse of purification was revealed with a content and tone different from the other verses. Among these differences is the change in pronouns; in the verses before the verse of purification, there are 25 pronouns or verbs, all of which are feminine, and after the verse of purification there are

two pronouns and verbs, which are also feminine. However, all the pronouns and verbs in the verse of purification, which is situated between these 27 feminine pronouns and verbs, are either masculine or pronouns that refer to both masculine and feminine - in short, they are not exclusively feminine pronouns.

Is this a coincidence, or does it have a special purpose?

Without doubt, it is not a coincidence and has a specific reason that should not be easily overlooked.

If the verse of purification was also meant to address the wives of the Prophet (s.a.w.), why did the form of address change and why were exclusively feminine pronouns not used?

Undoubtedly, the content and substance of the verse and the change in its pronouns and verbs indicate that this verse does not refer to the Prophet's wives. Further explanation will follow in upcoming discussions.

Commentary and Exegesis

The Verse of Purification: Clear Proof of Infallibility!

As mentioned before, every word of this noble verse merits study, contemplation, and deep reflection, and has been the subject of discussion and debate. Therefore, we will examine each word individually:

1- "*Innamā*" - This word, which means "only" in English, is used for restriction and exclusivity. From this word, it becomes clear that there is something in this noble verse that does not apply to all Muslims, otherwise this word would not have been used.

The "impurity" (*rijs*) mentioned in this verse has not been removed from everyone, but rather from specific individuals mentioned in the verse. Moreover, this "impurity" is a specific type of impurity that has been removed from specific individuals, and only they have been purified.

This is because ordinary and common piety (*taqwā*) applies to all

Muslims, and avoiding sins and transgressions is obligatory for everyone. However, what is intended in this verse and is specific to certain individuals must be something special and beyond ordinary piety!

2- "*Yurīdu Allāh*" ("God wills")

What is meant by God's will in this verse? Is it legislative will (*irāda tashrī'iyya*) or existential will (*irāda takwīniyya*)? Answer: To address this question, we need to provide a brief explanation about existential and legislative will:

Legislative will: Legislative will refers to divine commands and directives, or in other words, religious obligations and prohibitions. Verse 185 of *Sūrat al-Baqara* is one of the verses where divine will refers to legislative will. In this noble verse, after stating the obligation of fasting in the month of Ramadan and its exemption for travelers and the sick, God says:

"God desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you."

God desires ease for you, not hardship!

The divine will in this verse refers to legislative will; meaning, God's rulings regarding fasting in the month of Ramadan are easy and not difficult. Indeed, none of Islam's rulings are difficult, which is why the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"I have been sent to you with the easy and tolerant monotheistic religion"[1]

Existential will (*irāda takwīniyya*): Existential will means creation and bringing into existence; God's existential will is His will to create and bring something or someone into existence.

An example of this divine will appears in verse 82 of *Sūrat Yāsīn*. In this verse, God says:

"All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is."

The will mentioned in this verse refers to existential will. Indeed, God is so powerful that if He were to will the creation of another world like this amazing one we live in - which according to scientists has a sun 1.2 million times larger than Earth and contains 100 billion stars in its solar system averaging the size of our sun, and this is just

in our solar system - if God's will were to create another such world, He need only command it and it would immediately come into existence. "Greatness belongs to God, the One, the Subduer[2]"!

Now that we are familiar with these two types of divine will, is the divine will mentioned in the Verse of Purification legislative or existential? In other words, has God asked the People of the House (a.s.) to be pure and clean and to stay away from impurity and filth, or has God Himself washed away impurity and filth from their existence and made them pure and clean?

The answer is undoubtedly that this refers to existential will (*irāda takwīniyya*); because the command to be pure and God-fearing is not exclusive to the People of the House, rather this command is general and includes all Muslims. However - as we mentioned before - the implication of "indeed" (*innamā*) is that something special has been granted exclusively to the People of the House (a.s.) that does not extend to all Muslims.

Therefore, God has bestowed a gift upon the People of the House (a.s.) through His existential will and has created a power within them called "infallibility" (*'iṣma*) that removes all impurity and filth from them, and they will always remain pure and free from sin and error!

Question: Does the power of infallibility (*'iṣma*) possessed by the infallible ones (a.s.) have a compulsory aspect?

In other words, do these noble personalities avoid sin without choice and obey God's commands without choice?

And in a third expression, if they wanted to commit a sin, would they be unable to do so? If this were the case, then the station of infallibility would not be meritorious. If it is different from this, then what is it?

Answer: The impossible (*muḥāl*) is of two types: 1. Rationally impossible 2. Conventionally impossible.

The "rationally impossible" is that which is impossible in terms of occurrence, such as it being both night and day at the same moment - this is rationally impossible. Or that the book you are reading has both 400 pages and 500 pages at the same moment! This too is ratio-

nally impossible; because the combination of contradictions is rationally impossible.[3]

However, sometimes something is rationally possible but conventionally does not occur; for instance, no rational person would appear naked in public streets. This is rationally possible but conventionally impossible. Therefore, regarding this matter, all rational people possess infallibility - people have partial infallibility in this case, because their intellect and consciousness do not permit them to commit such an act whose ugliness and repulsiveness is clear to all. Thus, all humans possess partial infallibility against certain sins and actions.

If we take a step further, we will find some people who possess partial infallibility against certain other sins and it is conventionally impossible for them to commit them; for example, it is impossible for a well-known religious scholar to drink wine on the twenty-first day of the blessed month of Ramadan, inside a mosque's prayer niche, on his prayer mat, in front of everyone!

This act is not rationally impossible; however, it is conventionally impossible for such a person; because his position, status, personality, intellect, and consciousness do not allow him to commit such an act.

However, the infallible ones (a.s.) are infallible against all sins and errors, meaning that although it is rationally possible for them to disobey and transgress, it is conventionally impossible for them to do so; because their intellect, piety, knowledge, and understanding regarding all sins and transgressions is like ordinary people's knowledge regarding appearing naked in public. Just as ordinary people are "infallible" against this sin, the infallible Imams (a.s.) possess the station of infallibility against all sins; meaning it is conventionally impossible for them to sin, even though it is rationally possible.

Therefore, infallibility is not a compulsory matter and is not in such a form that it removes free will from the infallible ones, which would devalue their actions.

As a result, God's will in this noble verse is His creative will (*takwīniyya*), and infallibility does not remove the free will and voli-

tion of the infallible Imams (a.s.) and does not compel them to avoid sin and disobedience. Rather, these great personalities, with complete free will, do not approach sin.

3. What is meant by "filth" (*al-rijs*)?

Rijs means impurity; sometimes it refers to external material impurities, sometimes it is used for spiritual impurities, and sometimes it is used for both, as Rāghib has explicitly stated in *Mufradāt*.

For each of the three cases mentioned above, we will present one verse from the Qur'an as evidence:

A. Spiritual filth: In verse 125 of *Sūrat al-Tawba*, we read:

"But as for those in whose heart is a sickness, it only adds defilement to their defilement, and they die while they are faithless."

The expression "in whose heart is a sickness" (*fī qulūbihim maraḍ*) is often used for hypocrites, and indeed hypocrisy is a sickness. Otherwise, a person either explicitly accepts divine commands and becomes Muslim, or explicitly rejects them and becomes a disbeliever. However, to outwardly accept and act upon them while not believing in them in one's heart is hypocrisy and duplicity, and is considered a type of sickness.

In any case, *rijs* in this noble verse means spiritual filth, since hypocrisy is considered a type of spiritual filth, not external or physical impurity.

B. Physical filth: In verse 145 of *Sūrat al-An'ām*, we read:

"Say, 'I do not find in what has been revealed to me that anyone be forbidden to eat anything except carrion or spilt blood, or the flesh of swine—for that is indeed unclean—or an impiety offered to other than God.'"

It is clear that *rijs* in this noble verse means physical filth.

C. Spiritual and physical filth: *Rijs* in verse 90 of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida* is used in both senses; in this verse we read:

"O you who have faith! Indeed wine, gambling, idols and the divining arrows are abominations of Satan's doing, so avoid them, so that you may be felicitous."

The term *rijs* in this verse refers to both physical and spiritual filth, since wine possesses physical impurity and filth, while

gambling and divining arrows do not have physical impurity but possess spiritual filth.

Therefore, *rijs* in the verses of the Qur'an has a general meaning that encompasses all types of impurity: physical and spiritual, moral and doctrinal, bodily and psychological.

Thus, in the verse of purification, God through His existential will has removed all types of impurity (in the full breadth of its meaning) from the People of the Household (a.s.) and purified them.

Our evidence that *rijs* in this verse includes both material and spiritual impurities is the absolute nature of this word. Since the word "al-rijs" is not restricted by any condition or qualification, and is expressed in an absolute and unconditional manner, it encompasses every type of impurity.

"And purify you with a thorough purification"

According to this verse, the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) are free from *rijs* and all types of impurity, and through divine existential will, they are purified, clean, and possess absolute infallibility.

Who are the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*)?

From the verse of purification, we understood that the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) possess a special characteristic and distinction in relation to other Muslims, which others lack, and that distinction is their absolute purity and infallibility.

But now this question arises: Who are the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*)?

Answer: Various views have been presented in the exegesis of "People of the Household" (*Ahl al-Bayt*). Consider these four examples:

1- Some Sunni exegetes have explained the People of the Household as referring to the wives of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) .[4] According to this explanation, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn (a.s.) are not part of the People of the Household! In other words, the People of the Household are the Prophet's relatives by marriage (*sababī*) and none of his blood relatives (*nasabī*) are considered among the People of the Household.

The reasoning for this view is that the verse of purification

appears among verses that all relate to the Prophet's wives (s.a.w.) - both the verses before and after it. Therefore, the context of the verse requires that this noble verse also relates to the Prophet's wives (s.a.w.).

However, this view is invalid for three reasons:

First: As mentioned before, in the five verses preceding the verse of purification, and in the beginning of verse 32 of *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, which contains the verse of purification, there are a total of 25 feminine pronouns and verbs. In the following verse (verse 33) there are also two instances of feminine verbs and pronouns. However, all the pronouns and verbs in the verse of purification are masculine, which either refers exclusively to men or includes both men and women, but certainly cannot refer to a specific group of women alone.

Therefore, given that the Qur'an is the word of God and God's word contains the most eloquent expressions, there must certainly be a purpose in this change of pronouns and verbs. The intended meaning of People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) must have been individuals other than the Prophet's wives, which is why God revealed the verse of purification in a style distinct from the verses before and after it.

Consequently, according to this explanation, the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) definitely cannot refer to the Prophet's wives, but rather to other individuals who must be identified through proof and evidence.

Second: The second reason for the invalidity of this belief is that, according to the explanation and exegesis of the verse of purification, the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) must possess the characteristic of absolute infallibility. Which Shi'i or Sunni scholar or exegete has ever attributed infallibility to the Prophet's wives? Although the Prophet's wives were generally good people, for some of them not only can we not claim infallibility, but we can prove with clear evidence and testimony that they committed major sins. Consider this example:

Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) was the only caliph who possessed both the distinction of divine appointment and the distinction of being chosen

by the people and Muslims! Moreover, his selection was different from the three previous caliphs; for the first caliph was chosen by a small, specific group at Saqīfa Banī Sā'ida, after which people were compelled to pledge allegiance to him. The second caliph was appointed solely by the first caliph, and the third caliph took control with just three votes from the six-member council. However, Ali (a.s.) was met with widespread public support, as people came to him willingly and with inner satisfaction to pledge allegiance. The crowd of people wanting to pledge allegiance to him was so large that he said:

"I feared that Hassan and Hussein might be crushed under the feet of the people!"[5]

However, we see one of the Prophet's wives rising in opposition to the Prophet's rightful caliph, breaking her allegiance, and contrary to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) instruction to his wives not to leave their homes after his death, she leaves Medina and rides a camel toward Basra. When she reaches the land of Ḥaw'ab and hears dogs barking, she remembers the Prophet's (s.a.w.) words:

"One of you will ride a camel, leaving Medina and reaching the land of Ḥaw'ab where dogs will bark at her. She will have strayed from God's path."

When she asks about the name of the land, they tell her: "This is the land of Ḥaw'ab." She decides to turn back, but the instigators of the Battle of the Camel deceive her with a trick to continue her journey. [6]

Can such a woman who opposed the words of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and his caliph, who waged war against the Prophet's caliph, and who caused the bloodshed of more than seventeen thousand Muslims, be considered infallible and free from impurity (*rijs*)?

Interestingly, she herself acknowledges her mistake, and when questioned about this war, its motivations, and who bears responsibility for the bloodshed, she merely expresses regret and attributes it to divine destiny! She wishes that such an event had never occurred!

Despite her own admission of error and her unacceptable justification of it, some zealous Sunni scholars consider it a form of juristic reasoning (*ijtihād*) and refuse to condemn her actions in any way!

Is this a valid position? Can juristic reasoning against the Prophet's undisputed caliph – who according to Aisha herself was "the best of people, and whoever harbors hatred for him is an unbeliever" – be considered valid reasoning? Moreover, if we open this door, there would be no sinners or wrongdoers left, as every wrongdoer would justify their error under the guise of juristic reasoning and consider it a form of their own deduction and legal interpretation!

Consequently, the Battle of the Camel has no logical justification, and without doubt, those who ignited it were sinful and in error. They cannot be considered purified from impurity (*rijs*).

Third: As will be discussed in future sections, we have numerous traditions from both Shi'i and Sunni sources indicating that the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) are the Prophet (s.a.w.), Ali (a.s.), Fatima (a.s.), and Hassan and Hussein (a.s.), not the Prophet's wives.

2- The second theory is that "the People of the Household" (*Ahl al-Bayt*) refers to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), Ali, Hassan, Hussein, and Fatima (a.s.), as well as the Prophet's wives .[7]

According to this theory, one of the three objections to the first theory (the first objection) is resolved, since a group consisting of both men and women can be addressed with a masculine pronoun. However, the other two objections (which were explained in the critique of the first theory) regarding the Prophet's wives still apply here, therefore this theory is also unacceptable.

3- Some other exegetes have explained "the People of the Household" (*Ahl al-Bayt*) as referring to the inhabitants of Mecca, saying that "the House" (*al-Bayt*) in the phrase "People of the Household" (*Ahl al-Bayt*) refers to the House of God, the Ka'ba, and therefore "People of the Household" applies to those who are inhabitants and residents of Mecca.

The invalidity of this theory is also clear, and the two objections to the first theory apply here as well. Furthermore, the people of Mecca had no special privilege over the people of Medina that would warrant God removing impurity from them alone.

4- The fourth theory, which is the view of all Shi'i scholars and is not subject to any of the above objections, is that "the People of the Household" (*Ahl al-Bayt*) refers to specific individuals from the Prophet's family (s.a.w.), namely Ali, Fatima, Hassan, and Hussein (a.s.), with the Prophet himself (s.a.w.) at their head.

Evidence for the correctness of this theory is that none of the three objections raised against the first theory apply here. Moreover, there are numerous traditions supporting the fourth theory.

Allama Tabatabai in *al-Mīzān* counts more than 70 such traditions .[8] Interestingly, most of these traditions appear in primary Sunni sources, including:

1- *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* ,[9] which is one of their most authoritative hadith collections.

2- *Ṣaḥīḥ Tirmidhī* ,[10] one of the six canonical collections.

3- *al-Mustadrak ʿalā l-Ṣaḥīḥayn*[11]

4- *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* by Bayhaqi ,[12] which, although primarily containing legal traditions, also includes non-legal traditions.

5- *al-Durr al-Manthūr* by Suyuti[13]

6- *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*[14] by Hakim Haskani Nishapuri

7- *Musnad Aḥmad*[15]

Therefore, the traditions that explain "the People of the Household" (*Ahl al-Bayt*) as referring to the five people of the cloak (a.s.) are not only numerous but are also found in authoritative primary Sunni sources.

Fakhr Razi makes an interesting admission regarding the quantity and reliability of these traditions. In his exegesis of the verse of mutual imprecation (*mubāhala*) (3:61), he states:

"Know that this tradition is considered authentic by consensus among the exegetes"[16]

As a result, there is no room for debate regarding either the quantity or authenticity of the traditions explaining "the People of the Household" (*Ahl al-Bayt*). From among all these traditions, we will content ourselves with mentioning just one hadith, namely the Hadith of the Cloak (*ḥadīth al-kisā'*).

The Hadith of the Cloak has been narrated in two forms: 1- Detailed 2- Concise.

The detailed Hadith of the Cloak, which is commonly recited for healing the sick, solving problems, and removing difficulties, is not considered multiply transmitted (*mutawātir*).

However, the concise Hadith of the Cloak is multiply transmitted, and its content is as follows:

"One day, a piece of cloth was brought to the Prophet (s.a.w.). The Prophet sent for Ali, Fatima, Hassan, and Hussein (a.s.). When they came to the Prophet (s.a.w.), he placed them under the cloth and said:

'O God, these are my household and my special ones, remove impurity from them.' Then Gabriel descended with the verse: 'Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.'"

In Sunni sources, the following passage is also mentioned after this tradition: "Umm Salama came forward and asked the Prophet's permission to join them under the cloth, but the Prophet said: 'You are a good person, but this is not your place.'"[17]

In another hadith, the same incident is reported regarding 'Ā'isha. [18]

Therefore, according to this tradition, the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) are the five people of the cloak (a.s.).

Question: What was the purpose of this act? Why did the Prophet (s.a.w.) gather them under the cloth and make that beautiful statement about his household? Why did he not allow Umm Salama and 'Ā'isha to join them under the cloth?

Answer: The Prophet's (s.a.w.) purpose in these formalities and details was to establish a clear distinction.

The Prophet wanted to introduce the People of the Household in such a way that no objection would be possible and no ambiguity or vagueness would remain, so that others, whether then or in later times, knowingly or unknowingly, would not apply the term "People of the Household" (*Ahl al-Bayt*) to other individuals.

For this reason, he did not even stop at these formalities. According to a remarkable tradition found in various sources,

including *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, narrated by Anas ibn Malik, the Prophet's personal servant, we read: After this incident, every day after the dawn call to prayer and before leading the congregational prayer, the Prophet would stand in front of Ali and Fatima's house and repeat:

"Prayer, O People of the Household. Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."

He continued this practice consistently for six months![19]

The above tradition has also been narrated by Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri, who says:

"The Prophet did this every morning for eight consecutive months!" [20]

Perhaps the Prophet continued this practice for longer than the mentioned period, but Anas ibn Malik did not witness more than six months and Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri did not witness more than eight consecutive months.[21] Therefore, the Prophet's purpose in these matters was to distinguish the People of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) from others and to establish their clear, complete, and unique exemplification, which he truly accomplished fully and perfectly. We do not find any other instance where the Prophet (s.a.w.) repeated and emphasized something to this extent. With all these emphases, recommendations, and explanations, would it not be unfair to say that the People of the Household are other than the five people of the cloak, and to present incorrect exegeses?!

Why indeed have some people gone astray in matters so clear and evident, which are as plain as daylight, and entangled both themselves and others?

The answer to this question is also clear: personal opinion-based exegesis (*tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*) and prejudgment have cast a thick veil over their eyes and ears. Unfortunately, this veil is so thick that they cannot even believe - or do not want to accept - what is as clear as day!

Our Lord! We are always in need of Your guidance and direction. Do not deprive us for a moment from the lights of Your guidance!

O God! Save us from personal opinion-based exegesis and prejudgment, especially regarding the Qur'an and religious teachings, and help us reach the truth!

Answering Several Questions

Various questions have been raised about the Verse of Purification (*āyat al-taṭhīr*), of which we will address a few examples:

First Question: At most, the Verse of Purification indicates the infallibility (*'iṣma*) of the People of the Household, namely Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn (a.s.), with the Prophet (s.a.w.) at their head. However, this verse has no connection to the matter of divine authority (*wilāya*) and leadership (*imāma*).

In other words, our discussion concerns verses that indicate the divine authority and leadership of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), but this verse does not indicate this matter. Rather, the most it indicates is the infallibility of the People of the Household. Why have you used this verse as evidence?

Answer: If the station of infallibility is established for the People of the Household (a.s.), leadership necessarily accompanies it. This is because, as previously discussed, the Imam must be obeyed unconditionally, and obedience to the Imam is obligatory upon everyone without any conditions. Unconditional obedience is not possible for anyone who is not infallible, therefore the Imam must be infallible. Moreover, if an Imam is to be appointed or elected, in the presence of an infallible person, one must not turn to someone who is not infallible.

God, in verse 124 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, which concerns Abraham (a.s.), in response to Abraham's request for leadership and after he passed difficult tests, appoints him as an Imam. After attaining prophethood, being one of the resolute prophets (*ulū l-'azm*), and being the Friend of the Most Merciful (*Khalīl al-Raḥmān*), He grants him a higher station called leadership. But in response to his request for the continuation of leadership in his progeny and descendants, He says:

"My pledge does not extend to the unjust."

And in this way, He establishes infallibility (*'iṣma*) as an inseparable part of leadership, and considers those who have been tainted by injustice, even before assuming leadership, as unworthy of leadership.

Second Question: We accept that every Imam must be infallible, but is every infallible person an Imam? Was not Lady Fatima (a.s.) infallible? Why then did she not become an Imam?

Answer: Infallibility among women does not necessitate leadership, but among men it does. Therefore, we do not find any infallible men in the world other than the Prophets and Imams (a.s.)!

Third Question: In previous discussions, it was said that the difference in pronouns between the Verse of Purification and the verses before and after it, which were revealed about the Prophet's wives (s.a.w.), indicates that those addressed in the Verse of Purification are different from the Prophet's wives. However, we find a similar difference in pronouns in the story of Abraham (a.s.) having a child in his old age, yet his wife is still addressed in the verse. In verse 73 of *Sūrat Hūd*, we read:

"They said, 'Are you amazed at God's dispensation? [That is] God's mercy and His blessings upon you, members of the household. Indeed He is all-laudable, all-glorious.'"

According to this verse, Abraham's wife is addressed by the masculine pronoun "upon you" (*'alaykum*).

Answer: The addressee of the phrase "Are you amazed" (*ata'jabīna*) is only Abraham's wife, hence the verb is in the feminine singular form, but the addressees of "upon you" (*'alaykum*) are all members of Abraham's household, both men and women. However, according to the evidence previously discussed, the addressees of the Verse of Purification cannot be the Prophet's wives, neither independently nor alongside the Five People of the Cloak (*āl 'abā*).

Fourth Question: If the Verse of Purification addresses only the Five People of the Cloak (a.s.), why is this verse placed among verses concerning the Prophet's wives?

Answer: As 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī[22] and others have stated, the

verses of the Qur'an were not all revealed at once, and sometimes even the phrases within a single verse were not revealed simultaneously.

Rather, the verses of the Qur'an were revealed according to needs and events. Therefore, it is possible that the story of the Prophet's wives (s.a.w.) was raised at one point in time and the relevant verses were revealed accordingly, and after some time, the story of the People of the Cloak and the Prophet's (s.a.w.) request for the purification of the People of the Household was raised, followed by the revelation of the Verse of Purification, and then other verses were revealed according to specific circumstances and particular events.

Therefore, it is not necessary for all verses of the Qur'an to have a specific connection with each other.

As a result, the Verse of Purification both indicates the infallibility of the Five People of the Cloak (a.s.) and establishes the leadership of Imam Ali (a.s.).

1. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 65/346

2. Greatness and magnificence belong exclusively to the One Almighty Lord

3. For more familiarity with this logical terminology, refer to the book *Āshnāyī bā 'Ulūm-i Islāmī, Manṭiq wa Falsafa* by the martyred Scholar Muṭahharī, p. 65 onwards

4. Al-Qurṭubī, in *Tafsīr al-Furqān*, 6/5264, quotes this theory from "Zajjāj"

5. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Third Sermon (The Shiqshiqiyya Sermon)

6. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 6/225, (cited from Translation and Commentary of Nahj al-Balāgha, volume 1, p. 403)

7. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 25/209

8. *Al-Mīzān* (translated), 32/178

9. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4/1883, hadith 2424 (cited from *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/143)

10. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 2/503

11. *Al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 2/416 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 2/504)

12. *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 2/149

13. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 5/198

14. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/10-92

15. *Musnad Aḥmad*, 1/330, and 4/107 and 6/292 (cited from *Payām-i Qurʾān*, 9/144)

16. *Tafsīr Fakhr Rāzī*, 8/80

17. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/24, 31.

18. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/37, 38.

19. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

20. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/28.

21. A period of nine months has also been narrated from Abu Saʿīd al-Khudrī. Refer to *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/29.

22. *Al-Mīzān* (translated), 32/179.

7

SAY, 'I DO NOT ASK YOU ANY REWARD FOR IT EXCEPT LOVE OF MY RELATIVES...'

"Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives.' Whoever performs a good deed, We shall enhance for him its goodness. Indeed God is all-forgiving, all-appreciative."

(*Sūrat al-Shūrā*, verse 23)

Overview of the Discussion

The Sunni scholars have fallen into prejudgments and personal interpretation in explaining this verse, and have therefore presented very strange views, which we will address in the course of the discussion. However, the Shi'i scholars, under the guidance of the People of the Household, have presented a clear and good exegesis.

A Look at the Previous Verses

To better understand the exegesis of the Verse of Love, it is necessary to have a brief discussion about the previous verse, namely verse 22 of *Sūrat al-Shūrā*, as well as the beginning of the Verse of Love which was not mentioned above.

"And those who believe and do righteous deeds" - After God describes the fate of the oppressors in the previous verses and depicts their dark future, He proceeds to portray the bright future of those Muslims who combined faith with action and were not content with merely testifying to God's oneness and the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), but rather persisted in performing righteous and worthy deeds. In this noble verse, while depicting the future of believers who perform righteous deeds, three important rewards in the hereafter are mentioned, each more valuable than the other:

1- "In the gardens of paradise" - Their first reward is that when they enter paradise in the hereafter, they will dwell in the "gardens of paradise" (*rawḍāt al-jannāt*).

Question: Where are the "Gardens of Paradise" (*rawḍāt al-jannāt*)?

Answer: If we study the entire Qur'an, we find this phrase only in verse 22 of *Sūrat al-Shūrā*. Arabs use the word "garden" (*rawḍa*) to refer to lush, dense, well-watered, and verdant gardens, and its plural is "gardens" (*rawḍāt*).

Although this word is sometimes applied to places where water gathers, the intended meaning of "garden" (*rawḍa*) here is the first meaning. Thus, "gardens of paradise" (*rawḍāt al-jannāt*) means the gardens of heaven.

Question: Given that all of paradise is like a lush and verdant garden, what is meant by the phrase "gardens of paradise"?

Answer: From the above phrase, we understand that in addition to paradise itself, there are special gardens that belong to God's special servants.

Therefore, the first reward and distinction for believers who perform righteous deeds is the "gardens of paradise" (*rawḍāt al-jannāt*).

2- "They will have whatever they wish" - In addition to dwelling in

these special and unique gardens of paradise, believers who perform worthy deeds will have whatever they desire made available to them. Regarding material blessings, one cannot imagine anything greater than this - that a person would be given whatever they desire and wish for!

3- "Near their Lord" - The blessings of paradise are a combination of material and spiritual blessings. From the perspective of material blessings, as mentioned, believers who perform righteous deeds are in the best condition, and the same is true from a spiritual perspective; for they are in the proximity of God's presence, they are "near their Lord" (*'inda rabbihim*), the same station that is mentioned for martyrs in verse 169 of *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*. However, what exactly is meant by "near their Lord" and what blessings it entails is not clear to us.

"That is the great bounty" - Since the highest material and spiritual blessings in paradise have been prepared for believers who perform righteous deeds, God has called it the "great bounty." When God describes something as "great bounty" (*faḍl kabīr*), it is clearly so magnificent that whatever we imagine falls short of its true greatness.

The conclusion is that there are two criteria for servitude to God: faith and righteous deeds. Therefore, other things like knowledge and wealth, property and power, social status and the like, are only considered valuable when they are aligned with faith and righteous deeds.

"That is what God gives as glad tidings to His servants who believe and perform righteous deeds" - In this noble verse, He again reiterates that the "gardens of paradise" (*rawḍāt al-jannāt*) and "they will have whatever they wish" and "near their Lord" are what God has given as glad tidings to believing servants who perform righteous deeds, so that the hardships of obedience, servitude, and struggle against the desires of the lower self do not appear difficult to them.

Having considered the brief explanation given about the above verse, now turn your attention to the explanation and exegesis of the verse of love (*mawadda*):

Explanation and Exegesis

Love of the Prophet's Family: The Reward for His Message

"Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it'" - Without doubt, the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) endured numerous hardships and difficulties in conveying his message and fulfilling his divine missions. However, he never asked anyone for any reward or compensation for these valuable works. When some Muslims came to him and said:

"If you encounter financial difficulties, our wealth is at your disposal without any conditions," the above verse was revealed ,[1] indicating that the Prophet does not ask anyone for any reward for his message.

"Except love of [my] relatives" - The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) asked Muslims for only one thing as reward for his message, and that was "love for his near relatives."

The conclusion is that for all his twenty-three years of effort for Islam and Muslims, the Prophet asked for only one thing, and that was "love of relatives" (*mawaddat al-qurbā*).

Who Are the "Near Relatives" (*Qurbā*)?

The entire discussion of this noble verse revolves around the word "near relatives" (*qurbā*) and its exegesis.

Who exactly are these near relatives (*qurbā*) whose love the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) asked from Muslims as reward for his message?

Some scholars and exegetes have passed over this noble verse very superficially, not taking the trouble to reflect and contemplate on it, or because it did not align with their preconceptions, they have glossed over it! However, this noble verse has great depth. To understand the greatness of the verse and what it presents, we will examine this same issue in the Qur'an through the words of other prophets (a.s.).

If we look at *Sūrat al-Shu'arā'*, we will see that the matter of reward and compensation for prophethood was also discussed by five other great prophets before the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.): Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, and Shu'ayb (a.s.). However, these noble figures did not ask for any reward or compensation, not even love for their relatives! All of these noble ones said: "I do not ask you any reward for it; my reward lies only with the Lord of all the worlds".[2]

How is it that these prophets did not ask for any kind of reward, while the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) presented "love for his relatives" as reward for his message?

Was the station of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) higher, or that of the other divine prophets (a.s.)? Without doubt, the Seal of Prophets, Muhammad Muṣṭafā (s.a.w.), was superior to all prophets, and therefore on the Day of Resurrection, each prophet will only be a witness over his own community, while the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) will be a witness and testifier over all witnesses and testifiers ("So how shall it be, when We bring from every nation a witness and We bring you as a witness to them?"[3]).

Indeed, the matter has become more complex and difficult! How is it that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), who is the greatest of God's prophets, asks for reward for his message, while none of the previous divine prophets asked for any reward?!

This verse truly deserves discussion, reflection, and careful consideration, although unfortunately some have passed over it very superficially, to avoid the torment of conscience and to flee from the awakening lashes of conscience!

Question: What was the purpose of the Prophet (s.a.w.) in asking for this reward and compensation? Did he want this reward and compensation solely for himself, or were there other sacred objectives hidden in this request that would benefit the people and Muslims?

Answer: To clarify this question, we need to place two other verses from the Qur'an alongside the verse of affection (*mawaddat*), so that the verses of the Qur'an may explain one another.

1- In verse 47 of *Sūrat Saba'* we read: "Say, 'Whatever reward I may

have asked you is for your own good. My [true] reward lies only with God, and He is witness to all things.'"

This verse clarifies to some extent the ambiguity arising from the verse of affection, and it becomes clear that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), like other prophets, did not ask for any reward or compensation for himself from the people, and the matter of "love for relatives" (*mawaddat al-qurbā*) was in fact raised for the benefit of the people themselves!

2- In verse 57 of *Sūrat al-Furqān*, which is actually an explanation of verse 47 of *Sūrat Saba'* and clarifies how "love for relatives" benefits the people, we read: "Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord.'"

The previous verse showed that the reward for prophethood had no personal benefit for the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), rather its benefit returns to the people themselves, and this verse shows that essentially raising the matter of reward for prophethood itself is in line with the continuation of the objectives of prophethood, and in reality its benefit returns to the essence of the religion.

The result is that the matter of "reward and compensation for prophethood" is not a personal benefit exclusive to the Prophet of Islam, and like other prophets, he did not ask for any personal reward or compensation from the people. Rather, the reward for prophethood mentioned in the verse of affection (*mawaddat*) is in reality a cause for the continuation of prophethood. Now, considering that "love for relatives" (*mawaddat al-qurbā*) has such extraordinary value that it causes the continuation of prophethood, should we pass by this verse easily, lest our prejudgments and false beliefs become subject to fluctuation and change?!

The Shi'i Exegesis of "Relatives" (*Qurbā*)

Shi'i scholars, through contemplation and careful consideration of this verse, unanimously believe that "relatives" (*qurbā*) refers to the family of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). Without doubt, "leadership" (*wilāya*) is the continuation of prophethood and is equal and parallel

to it. Therefore, this reward (love for relatives) is proportionate to that task (prophethood); moreover, leadership guides people toward God.

If we explain the verse of affection according to how Shi'i scholars and exegetes have explained it, both the meaning of the verse of affection becomes clear and other verses related to this verse become evident, and it becomes apparent that the relationship between them is logical and correct. Interestingly, in the Supplication of *Nudba*, which is a course in divine teachings and filled with leadership (*wilāya*), these three verses are mentioned and good and appropriate conclusions are drawn from them, and the Imams are mentioned as paths leading to divine mercy and pleasure.

Sunni Views Regarding "Relatives" (*Qurbā*)

Sunni scholars have presented various explanations in this regard, none of which are appropriate to the verse. Consider a few examples:

1- Among their claims is that what is meant by "relatives" (*qurbā*) is love and affection for the Prophet's household, but an affection devoid of leadership (*wilāya*), Imamate (*imāmat*), and succession (*khilāfa*)! Merely an outward attachment to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) family and his pure household!

But can this simple friendship be considered equal to prophethood?

Can ordinary love without leadership and Imamate be the reward for prophethood and equivalent to it?

Furthermore, how could the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) request a reward for prophethood (in the way you suggest) when none of the previous prophets made such a request, but rather sought their reward from God? Therefore, the above exegesis is unacceptable.

2- Others have explained "relatives" (*qurbā*) as good deeds that bring one closer to God, thus "love for relatives" (*mawaddat al-qurbā*) means love for good deeds; loving prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, holy struggle (*jihād*), maintaining family ties, respecting elders, and other good deeds are considered the reward and compensation for prophethood!

3- Some have said that "in" (*fī*) in the verse of affection means "for" (*lām*), in which case the meaning of the verse becomes: "The reward and compensation for my prophethood is that you love me because I am your relative!" They then constructed an elaborate family tree for this purpose and explained the relation of all Arab tribes to the Prophet (s.a.w.), claiming that they were all somehow related to the Prophet (s.a.w.)!

The problem with this exegesis is clear because:

First: The use of "in" (*fī*) to mean "for" (*lām*) is very rare and uncommon, and we have no evidence or proof that it carries this meaning in the above verse.

Second: Personal affection for the Prophet (s.a.w.) is not equivalent to prophethood and messengership, and the reward for messengership must be proportionate to messengership itself.

Is the statement "Love me and do not harm me because I am your relative" equivalent and comparable to messengership?

Does this exegesis not diminish the lofty meaning of this noble verse?

4- Another exegesis, which is even weaker than the above, is:

"Love your own relatives; the reward for the Prophet's messengership is your affection for your own relatives!" One would prefer not to believe that such exegeses were presented by scholars, but unfortunately, this is the case!

The invalidity of this view is so obvious that it needs no response. Is love for relatives equivalent and comparable to messengership? Can affection for one's own relatives be considered a continuation of prophethood?!

Indeed, when we are superficial and captive to our own prejudices, we fall into such clear and obvious errors.

Does this exegesis and the previous one truly correspond and align with the noble verse, or would someone with even the most basic knowledge of Arabic literature quickly notice its unfamiliarity? This is why these scholars themselves admit that such exegeses are metaphorical and not literal, or are in the category of disconnected exception (*istithnā' munqaṭi'*), which is also a type of metaphor!

Why should we explain a Qur'anic verse in a way that leads us to non-literal and metaphorical meanings? Why not explain love for relatives (*mawaddat al-qurbā*) as leadership (*wilāya*) and Imamate (*imāmat*), which harmonizes in every way with the verse under discussion and other related verses?!

An Unwitting Admission!

Among the wonders of our time is that many Sunni exegetes have narrated a detailed and lengthy Hadith from the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) regarding love and affection for the Prophet's household (s.a.w.) in their commentary on this noble verse. When one reads this long and beautiful Hadith and reflects a little on its contents, one's amazement and astonishment at those baseless exegeses only increases!

Consider this narration, which is quoted directly from Fakhr Rāzī's exegesis:

"The author of *al-Kashshāf*[4] narrates from the Prophet (s.a.w.)"

In this narration, he quotes twelve profound statements from the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.):

1."Whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad dies a martyr."

Is this love an ordinary love devoid of *wilāya* ("divine authority") and *imāma* ("leadership")?

If it were ordinary affection and love, would such a person be ranked among the martyrs?

Or is the intended meaning of such love - which elevates a person to such a degree that they are ranked among the martyrs - a love coupled with *wilāya* and *imāma*?

1."Know that whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad dies forgiven."

Indeed, what kind of love is this that erases and destroys sins! Such that if a person can maintain it until and at the time of death, they depart this world forgiven and pure? Is this ordinary affection?

1."Know that whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad dies repentant."

Meaning this love takes the place of repentance, and even if one does not succeed in repenting, they die like those who have repented. What kind of love is this truly?

1."Know that whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad dies as a believer with perfect faith."

Does simple affection cause the perfection of faith? There must certainly be something significant within these statements that leads to such lofty perfections.

1."Know that whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad, the Angel of Death gives them glad tidings of Paradise, followed by Munkar and Nakīr."

Indeed, whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad (a.s.), the Angel of Death gives them glad tidings of Paradise, followed by Munkar and Nakīr (the angels tasked with questioning in the intermediate realm). What kind of love is this that causes a person to receive glad tidings of Paradise at the very beginning of death?

1."Know that whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad will be escorted to Paradise just as a bride is escorted to her husband's house."

Meaning they will be taken to Paradise with honor, glory, and love. Indeed, the elixir of love for the family of Muhammad (a.s.) has such extraordinary effects!

1."Know that whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad, two doors to Paradise will be opened for them in their grave."

Question: Why two doors?

Answer: Perhaps one is due to the blessing of prophethood and the other is the fruit of *wilāya* ("divine guardianship") and *imāma* ("leadership")!

1."Know that whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad, God will make their grave a place of visitation for the angels of mercy."

Indeed, can one believe that with simple love, a person's grave becomes a place of visitation for angels?

1."Know that whoever dies with love for the family of Muhammad dies upon the *sunna* ("prophetic tradition") and the community."

In the above nine statements, the effects of love, friendship, and affection for the People of the House (a.s.) were explained. And the next three statements speak about the evil consequences of hatred and enmity towards the People of the House (a.s.).

1."Know that whoever dies with hatred for the family of Muhammad will come on the Day of Resurrection with 'despairing of God's mercy' written between their eyes."

How dangerous is hatred for the family of Muhammad (a.s.), that it causes such downfall and misfortune?!

1."Know that whoever dies with hatred for the family of Muhammad dies an unbeliever."

This evil effect is worse than the previous effect of hatred for the family of Muhammad (a.s.).

1."Know that whoever dies with hatred for the family of Muhammad will not smell the fragrance of Paradise."

Interestingly, according to some traditions, "the sweet fragrance of Paradise can be sensed from a distance of a thousand years' journey! [5]"

According to this tradition, the meaning of the above statement becomes: One who harbors hatred for the family of Muhammad not only will not enter Paradise, but is distant from Paradise by a journey of 500 years, and that is why they cannot smell its fragrance. In short, such a person is very far from Paradise!

How can one believe that a scholar like Fakhr Rāzī would narrate such a beautiful and profound tradition with all its important and extraordinary effects, and then explain it as mere superficial and simple love for the family of Muhammad (a.s.) without sufficient attention, precision and study?! Even more strange is that after narrating the above tradition, he proceeds to explain and expound on the family of Muhammad (a.s.), who are the focus of this tradition, saying:

"The family of Muhammad (a.s.) are those whose affairs return to him; those who have stronger and more complete connections are

considered 'family' (*āl*). And there is no doubt that Fatima, Ali, Hasan, and Husayn had the strongest connection with the Messenger of God (s.a.w.), and this is among the established facts derived from widely transmitted traditions.[6]"

It is interesting to note these statements from a partisan Sunni scholar. These statements are so close to Shi'i teachings that when reading them, I doubted for a moment whether this book was the exegesis of a Sunni scholar or a Shi'i one. Could I be reading a Shi'i exegesis?! When I looked at the book's cover, I realized I had not made a mistake and was indeed reading Fakhr Rāzī's exegesis!

Question: Considering what is mentioned in the verse of affection (*mawadda*), and taking into account the verses related to it, and with a careful study of the above beautiful tradition containing such excellent and profound statements, can one believe that the love and affection that is the focus of discussion in the tradition and the mentioned verse is a simple love devoid of *wilāya* ("divine guardianship") and *imāma* ("leadership")?!

Can one not definitively claim that the aforementioned affection means divine guardianship (*wilāya*) and leadership (*imāma*), which is the continuation of prophethood and equal to it in status?

If not, then what appropriate explanation can be offered that would be fully compatible with the mentioned tradition and the previous verses?

We must be grateful to God for bestowing upon us the love, affection, and divine guardianship of the People of the House (a.s.), and we must also be thankful to our fathers and mothers, in whose care we learned the divine guardianship of the family of Muhammad (a.s.).

The Explanation of Affection in the Words of Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.)

In a tradition from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.), we read:

"One who disobeys God does not love Him."[7]

Therefore, one who opposes the path of Ali (a.s.) does not love

him, because love must lead a person toward obedience, servitude, and submission.

For this reason, we say that love without obedience and servitude is not really love and affection at all.

Consider the following story:

Ḥājib was one of the skilled and accomplished poets; though he was a pure-hearted poet with refined verses, he would sometimes compose populist poetry like common poets.

One day, he composed the following inappropriate verse about the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.):

"O Ḥājib, if the transaction of the Day of Gathering is with Ali, I guarantee you can commit whatever sin you wish"

Meaning that if one has love, affection, and devotion to Ali (a.s.), it is sufficient for salvation, even if one is drowning in sin. This false love mentioned in the above verse is a green light for sinners.

One night he saw Ali (a.s.) in a dream, and he said to him: "Ḥājib, what is this verse that you have composed?!"

Ḥājib asked: "How should I say it?"

Ali (a.s.) corrected his verse as follows:

"O Ḥājib, if the transaction of the Day of Gathering is with Ali, Be ashamed before Ali's face and commit fewer sins"

Therefore, love means obeying God and abandoning sin.

The Exegesis of the Verse of Affection in Light of Traditions

There are various traditions from both Shi'i and Sunni sources explaining and commenting on this noble verse. We will suffice with mentioning a few examples:

1- Aḥmad, one of the great Sunni scholars, has narrated the following tradition in his book *Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥāba* from Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, who narrates from 'Āmir:

When the verse "Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives'" was revealed, they asked: "O Messenger of God! Who are your relatives? Who are these people whose love has

become obligatory upon us?" He said: "Ali, Fāṭima, and their two sons," and he repeated this three times.[8]

Several important points can be derived from this beautiful tradition:

First: The above tradition explicitly states that the meaning of "relatives" (*qurbā*) refers to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) household, not to the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself, nor to the relatives of Muslims in general, nor to good deeds and acts of devotion to God.

Furthermore, "relatives" does not include all of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) close relations, but rather specific and limited individuals whose names were mentioned.

Second: The understanding mentioned in the first point was also present in the minds of the Prophet's companions. For this reason, they did not pursue the various possibilities that some Sunni scholars have proposed, but directly understood and raised the issue of affection and love for the Prophet's (s.a.w.) close relatives. They also understood that the verse did not refer to all of the Prophet's relatives, which is why they asked the Prophet (s.a.w.) to specify them.

Third: The Prophet's (s.a.w.) companions understood from the verse of affection that love and affection for the "relatives" (*qurbā*) was obligatory, just as all Shi'i and Sunni scholars also hold this belief. Regardless of their different explanations of who the "relatives" are, they consider love and affection for them to be obligatory. However, we repeat this question: Why has love for the Prophet's (s.a.w.) household been made obligatory? Is this matter, like some religious rulings whose philosophy is not clear to us, purely devotional, or does it have a clear and evident philosophy, namely that love is a prerequisite for obedience and following these great personalities?

If we wish to have a correct explanation of the verse of affection and other related verses, as well as the lengthy tradition we read in Fakhr Rāzī's exegesis, the above tradition, and other traditions that will follow, we must understand love as the philosophy of guardianship (*wilāya*), governance, and succession. This is a guardianship that stands alongside prophethood and is equal to it, so that just as

prophethood is the foundation of Islam, guardianship is its continuation.

This is especially clear when we consider that despite the Prophet (s.a.w.) having many relatives and relations, such as ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and his children, other children of Abū Ṭālib, other children of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and his grandchildren, and the rest of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) relatives, he only pointed to Fāṭima, ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn. This is strong evidence that the intention was guardianship and leadership (*imāma*), for if it were ordinary affection, love for all of the Prophet's relatives would have been necessary.

2- Ṭabarsī in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, quoting from Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, narrates from Abū Umāma al-Bāhilī the following tradition from the Prophet (s.a.w.), in which we can see the roots of the Supplication of *Nudba*:

"God created the prophets from different trees, but created me and ʿAlī from a single tree. I am its root, ʿAlī is its branch, Fāṭima is its pollen, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are its fruits, and our followers (*ashyāʾ*) are its leaves. Whoever holds onto one of its branches will be saved, and whoever deviates from it will fall. Even if a servant were to worship God between Ṣafā and Marwa for a thousand years, then another thousand years, then another thousand years, until he becomes like a worn-out waterskin ,[9] if he does not attain our love, God will cast him on his face into the fire." Then he recited:

"Say: I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives."

"God created the roots of the prophets separately, but I (the Prophet of Islam) and ʿAlī are from one root and one tree. I am the root of this tree and ʿAlī is like its branches, and Fāṭima is its pollination and seed-formation, and Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are the fruits of this blessed tree, and our followers (*shīʿa*) are like the leaves of this tree. If a servant among the servants worships between Ṣafā and Marwa for a thousand years, and again for another thousand years, and for a third time for a thousand years (that is, a total of three thousand years of worship) until he becomes like a dried-up old waterskin, but does not attain our love and affection (*mawadda*) (these acts of

worship will be of no benefit to him, rather) God will cast him face-first into the fire of Hell!" Then the Prophet recited the verse of affection.[10]

In this hadith, several points are noteworthy:

First: This hadith also explicitly explains the "affection for relatives" (*mawaddat al-qurbā*) as affection for the People of the House of infallibility and purity (a.s.), and through its striking expressions clearly indicates that this love is not a simple or ordinary love, but rather a love that results in spiritual authority (*wilāya*) and succession (*khilāfa*).

Second: The beautiful hadith above is in fact a kind of illustration of the verse about the "good tree" .[11] One of the explanations of that verse is similar to what appears in this hadith.

Third: The leaves of a tree have the duty of protecting and preserving its fruits. If a tree has no leaves, its fruits will be destroyed by the sun's rays and other harmful elements.

The duty of the Shi'a, who according to the above hadith are like the branches and leaves of that blessed tree, is to protect and preserve the fruits of that tree, which are spiritual authority (*imāma*), leadership (*wilāya*), and guidance.

Fourth: From the hadith we learn that worship between Ṣafā and Marwa has a special quality that other parts of the Sacred Mosque do not have, yet even worship in that sacred place has no value without spiritual authority (*wilāya*)!

Fifth: We repeat again that if the love mentioned in this hadith and other similar narrations were ordinary love, all these hadiths would be shrouded in ambiguity. But if we explain it as spiritual authority (*wilāya*) and leadership (*imāma*), its meaning becomes very clear.

3- Al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* narrates a well-known tradition from Imam al-Sajjād:

"When the captives of Karbalā were brought to Damascus, one of the Syrians, who had been influenced by the intense propaganda of Mu'āwiya and his government, addressed the fourth Imam, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (a.s.), saying:

'Praise be to God who has exposed you and proven your claims false!'"

Although this was a very offensive remark, the Imam knew that he had fallen victim to the poisonous propaganda of the Umayyads and needed guidance and help. Therefore, without anger and with gentleness, he asked him:

"Do you read the Qur'an?"

"Yes, why shouldn't I?"

"Do you know who we are?"

"Who are you?"

"Have you recited this verse: 'Say, I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives'?"

"Yes, this verse makes love for the Prophet's (s.a.w.) family necessary and obligatory; but what does it have to do with you?"

"We are the relatives (*qurbā*) and family of the Prophet (s.a.w.)!"

When the elderly Syrian heard this, he was deeply moved and repented with great remorse .[12]

The sum of these indications and evidences shows that the love and affection mentioned in the verse of affection (*mawadda*) and the aforementioned narrations is not an ordinary or common love.

Important Points

1- According to some verses of the Qur'an, love should lead to obedience and servitude.

In verse 31 of *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, God says:

"Say, 'If you love God, then follow me; God will love you and forgive you your sins, and God is all-forgiving, all-merciful.'"

Therefore, whoever a person loves, they must obey them. So if we claim to love the People of the House (a.s.), we must obey and follow them, otherwise we will not be truthful in our love. We will discuss this further in the section on the message of the verse.

2- As mentioned before, the noble verse of affection (*mawadda*), even without considering all other verses and narrations, indicates the authority (*wilāya*) and leadership (*imāma*) of the Commander of

the Faithful (a.s.) and the infallible Imams (a.s.). When considering the narrations regarding its circumstances of revelation, its indication becomes clearer, and if we place this verse alongside other verses related to authority, such as the verse of completion (*ikmāl*), the verse of proclamation (*tablīgh*), the verse of the truthful ones (*ṣādiqīn*), and other similar verses, its indication becomes very clear and evident.

3- Two objections have been raised by al-Ālūsī, the well-known Sunni exegete, in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, the answers to which have become clear from previous discussions. Therefore, we will only mention these two:

a- How did the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) ask Muslims for the love of his family as a reward for his message, while none of the other prophets asked for any reward?

The answer to this question, as previously discussed, is that this reward was for the benefit of the entire Islamic community, not for the Prophet (s.a.w.) personally.

b- Even if we accept that the meaning of "near of kin" (*qurbā*) is love for the Prophet's family (s.a.w.), what connection is there between love on one hand and leadership (*imāma*) and succession (*khilāfa*) on the other, as the Shi'i claim?

The answer to this question has already been discussed: the reward for something must be commensurate with it. Love that is either the source or fruit of authority (*wilāya*) and leadership (*imāma*) is proportionate to the prophetic mission, but ordinary love devoid of authority will undoubtedly not be equal to the prophetic mission. Since we believe that God is wise and gives rewards appropriate to actions, and the Prophet (s.a.w.) is also wise and seeks appropriate rewards, then undoubtedly the intended meaning of the love under discussion is authority and leadership.

The Message of the Verse of Affection

What is meant by the affection (*mawadda*) that is presented in the noble verse as the reward for the prophetic mission?

What does it mean to love Ali (a.s.) and the Imams of guidance (a.s.)?

In answer to this question, we must say that there are two types of love:

1- False and deceptive love 2- True and genuine love

To clarify this matter, we must examine what motivates affection and love.

Why do we love Ali? For his wealth? For his perfections? For his knowledge? For his bravery? For his generosity and asceticism? For his self-sacrifice and devotion? For his struggle and defense of Islam and the Prophet (s.a.w.)? Or for other matters? If we love Ali for the values he believed in, do we ourselves reflect any of those values? If we do not, such love and affection is false and deceptive, but if we do, it is real and genuine love!

We must measure ourselves against this criterion and standard, and determine the type of our love and affection (*mawadda*) for these noble figures, so that if - God forbid - it is of the first type, we can change it, and if, God willing, it is of the second type, we can perfect and nurture it.

One of the values that the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) was firmly committed to was the precedence of principles over relationships, as exemplified in the story of the heated iron. Although you have heard this story many times, consider it once more:

Ali (a.s.), who after enduring oppression and years of silence and seclusion had now attained outward governance, was the powerful leader of the Muslims. His brother ʿAqīl - who was poor and had a large family - traveled from Medina to Kufa, the center of government, hoping to receive a larger share from the public treasury (*bayt al-māl*). Due to Kufa's heat, Ali spread the dinner cloth on the rooftop. However, this meal was like any other meal and bore no resemblance to the lavish spreads of kings and princes! For this reason, ʿAqīl refused to eat and said to his brother:

"This food does not agree with my stomach! Solve my problem so I can return to Medina."

Ali (a.s.) said: "Brother! The Kufa market is visible from here. The

shops are full of valuable and precious items. Let us both go to the market and rob a shop, and you can take whatever you want!"

'Aqīl said: "Dear brother! Are we thieves and robbers to do such a thing?!"

Ali (a.s.) replied: "Is giving you extra money from the public treasury not theft?!" Ali (a.s.) made another suggestion to his brother, saying: "I heard a caravan is approaching Kufa. Let us both lie in wait for the caravan with drawn swords and suddenly attack them; you can take whatever you need from the caravan!"

'Aqīl said: "Dear brother! Are we highway robbers to commit such an act?!"

Ali (a.s.) replied: "Giving you an extra share from the public treasury is also a form of theft and robbery, so why do you ask me to do it?!" [13]

Then Ali (a.s.) brought a heated piece of iron near his brother's hand. When 'Aqīl saw that this free-spirited ruler would not deviate from the path of justice even for a moment, he got up and left.

Throughout human history, where can we find a powerful brother in control of a country's treasury who would treat his own brother this way to preserve justice!

O God! Grant our officials the success to be free-spirited like the Leader of the Free, and to always prioritize principles over relationships.

Stages and Degrees of Love

Love, like many other things, has different stages, and not everyone's love for the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) is the same. Some people's love is false and merely lip service, having no roots in their hearts. Another group's love is not false and has roots in their hearts, but it is not deep - rather, it is superficial. For the third group, love has penetrated and taken root in the depths of their souls, such that their entire being has taken on the color and fragrance of their beloved. Such people's conduct is like Ali's, their words are like Ali's, their ethics are Alid, their giving is like Ali's giving - in short, everything

about them carries Ali's fragrance! This is the highest stage of love, a stage where its possessor would not exchange this love for anything else, and would even sacrifice their life for it.

Consider this example of such exalted love:

Maytham al-Tammār, a Pure Lover

Ali (a.s.) says to one of his pure lovers who possessed abundant love:

"In the future, you will be crucified because of your defense of me and my school of thought, and your love and devotion to me! How will you feel in that moment?"

This lover did not fear, did not tremble, did not flee from Ali. Rather, he became happy and said: "Master! Where will they crucify me?!"

Ali (a.s.) pointed to one of the palm trees of Kufa and said: "They will crucify you on the trunk of this palm tree."

This devoted lover not only did not distance himself from Ali (a.s.) nor flee from that city and land, but rather the fire of his love for Ali grew even more intense.

Every day he would come to that palm tree, tend to it, water it, pray beside it, express his love to the tree and converse with it:

"O palm tree! You were made for me and I for you! One day they will crucify me upon you for the crime of loving Ali (a.s.)!"[14] Where in human history can such loving human beings be found?!

The promised day arrives, and they crucify the devoted lover on that very palm tree, but not only do the flames of his love for his beloved, Ali (a.s.), not extinguish, they grow even brighter and even upon the crucifix he continues to recount Ali's virtues and merits! Until the enemy can no longer bear it and cuts out his tongue. Thus he sacrifices both his head and his tongue!

His head was sacrificed in the path of the beloved, how fitting This debt was paid from my neck, how fitting

From my heart's blood, henna was applied to fingertips My heart's blood became renowned, how fitting

Question: Is not dissimulation (*taqīya*) obligatory in Islam? Then

why did such individuals not practice dissimulation to preserve their lives and avoid putting themselves in danger and at death's door?

Answer: Just as dissimulation is obligatory in some cases, it is also forbidden in others. When the foundations of religion and doctrine are in danger, and darkness has encompassed everything, and all free people have been imprisoned, those who have the power and ability to expose must expose and reveal the oppression and crimes of the ruling system. In such cases, not only is dissimulation not forbidden, but if they practice dissimulation, they have committed a great and unforgivable sin![15]

1. *Tafsīr Namūna*, 20/402.

2. Qur'ān, 26:109, 127, 145, 164, 180. This matter has also been narrated from these noble prophets (a.s.) in other verses of the Qur'ān.

3. Qur'ān, 4:41.

4. This narration appears in *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, 4/220, 221.

5. *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, chapter 553, hadith 2585. The Prophet (s.a.w.) says in this narration:

6. *Tafsīr Fakhr Rāzī*, 27/165, 166. The original narration is also reported in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 8/5843 and *Tafsīr al-Tha'labī*, under the verse under discussion.

7. *Rawḍat al-Muttaqīn*, 13/156.

8. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/2. This narration is also reported in *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 6/7.

9. *Shann* in Arabic means an old waterskin. Arabs refer to all leather vessels as *shann*, but specifically use it for old waterskins. *Al-bālī* also means old or worn out. Therefore, the phrase *al-shann al-bālī* means a very old waterskin. The intended meaning of this phrase is that the person being discussed has become so old and weak due to worship and longevity that they have become like a dried-up, old, empty waterskin.

10. *Majma' al-Bayān*, 9/28.

11. Qur'ān, 14:24.

12. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 6/7.

13. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 9/613 (Tabriz edition), (cited from *Dāstān-i Rāstān*, 1/38).

14. The method of execution by gallows in the past was different from today. Today, the special noose is placed around the neck of the convicted person and they are pulled up, or the ground beneath them is removed, leading to death in a short time. However, in the past, the rope was tied around the person's hands and they were firmly bound to the gallows for many days, exposed to the heat of the sun, cold, and rain, dying slowly from thirst and hunger. Even after death, some bodies were not taken down, serving as a warning to others until their flesh decomposed completely, leaving only the skeleton!

15. For detailed discussions on this topic, please refer to the book *Taqiyyah Siparī Barāy-i Mubārizah-yi 'Amīqtar*.

8

'COME! LET US CALL OUR SONS AND YOUR SONS, OUR WOMEN AND YOUR WOMEN, OUR SOULS AND YOUR SOULS...'

"Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down God's curse upon the liars.'"

(*Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, verse 61)

Overview of the Discussion

The verse of mutual imprecation (*mubāhala*) is another of the verses concerning the authority (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) and his two sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (a.s.). This noble verse, which concerns the mutual imprecation between the Muslims and the Christians of Najrān, proves on one hand the truthfulness of Islam and the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), and on the other hand, explains the elevated status and high rank of the People of the House of the Prophet (a.s.), and thirdly, through it one can prove the authority and caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.).

Introduction

Before beginning the exegesis of the noble verse of mutual imprecation, it is necessary and essential to mention two points:

1. Mutual Imprecation as the Final Measure

Verses 35 to 60 of *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān* speak about Jesus Christ (a.s.). In these twenty-six verses, the birth of Jesus (a.s.), his stations, the personality of his mother, the virtues of Mary (a.s.), her dialogue with the angels, the heavenly table, and other matters have been discussed. After this lengthy discussion about Jesus (a.s.), God tells the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) that if the Christians, after all these matters and reasoned, logical discussions, still refuse and do not accept Islam, choose a different way of dealing with them - engage in mutual imprecation with them, so that the truth becomes clear.

2. What is Mutual Imprecation (*Mubāhala*)?

Mubāhala is derived from the root "*bahl*" which in Arabic means "to release" or "to let go." When camels give birth, their udders are tied to prevent the baby camel from drinking all the mother's milk, so that some remains for the camel's owner. However, sometimes they untie the udders so the baby camel can drink as much as it wants. The Arabs call such a camel with untied udders "*ibil bāhil*," meaning a camel whose milk has been released for its young to use.

In technical usage, however, it has a different meaning: when two parties, after logical discussions, rational arguments, and clear proofs, cannot convince each other, each one invokes a curse upon the other saying, "If I am right and you speak falsely, may divine punishment befall you," and the other party repeats the same. Such an act, when its conditions are met, is called *mubāhala*.

The connection between the linguistic and technical meanings of *mubāhala* is clear, because in *mubāhala* the person who claims to be

speaking the truth releases the other party and entrusts their matter to God.

3. The Verse of *Mubāhala*

The verse of *mubāhala* in the Qur'an states: "Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down God's curse upon the liars.'" [3:61]

This verse consists of three parts:

First: "Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you" - This indicates that when someone disputes with you about a matter after clear knowledge has come to you.

Second: "Say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls'" - This part specifies who should participate in the *mubāhala*.

Third: "Then let us pray earnestly and call down God's curse upon the liars" - This describes the actual act of *mubāhala*, which involves invoking divine curse (*la'nat*) upon the party that is lying.

Was the *Mubāhala* Carried Out?

Question: Was the *mubāhala* ceremony carried out according to the conditions and procedures specified in the Qur'an? If it was carried out, what were its results and effects?

Answer: The Qur'an is silent on this matter, and we cannot determine from its verses whether the *mubāhala* ceremony was carried out or not. However, this story is very well-known in Islamic history.

According to historical accounts, the Prophet (s.a.w.) discussed the *mubāhala* and its procedures with the Christians of Najran and set a specific day for it. The Grand Bishop of the Christians - who held the highest religious position among them - said to them:

"Prepare yourselves for the *mubāhala* and be present on the

appointed day. If the Prophet of Islam comes with his prominent companions and well-known Muslim personalities, then engage in *mubāhala* with him. However, if he comes with his women and children, then refrain from *mubāhala* with him. Why? Because in the first case, it would show that he is not truthful in his prophethood and would be defeated, but in the second case, it would indicate that he has a connection with God, having come forward with trust in Him."

When the appointed day arrived, the Christians observed that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) was coming while holding the hands of two young boys, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (a.s.), accompanied by Ali and Fāṭima (a.s.).

When the Grand Bishop of the Christians witnessed this scene, he said:

"I see faces that if they were to pray, their prayers would surely be answered and you would all be destroyed .[1] Refrain from the *mubāhala* and announce to the Muslims that we are willing to live as a protected minority alongside you and pay the required tax." The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) accepted their request and withdrew from the *mubāhala*.

The story of the *mubāhala* - as briefly mentioned - has been recorded in all Islamic historical accounts. Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, a scholar from the fourth century AH, has two beautiful and interesting statements about this in his two books:

1- In his book *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, he says:

"The narrators of biographical accounts and transmitters of traditions are in unanimous agreement that the Prophet (s.a.w.) took the hands of Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Ali, and Fāṭima, and called the Christians who had disputed with him to the *mubāhala*"[2]

2- The aforementioned author says in his book *Ma'rifat 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*:

"The reports in the exegetical works have been transmitted in succession from 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās and others that the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) took the hands of Ali, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn on the day of *mubāhala*, and placed Fāṭima behind them, then said: 'These are our sons, ourselves, and our women.'"[3]

Therefore, numerous traditions and narrations have been transmitted regarding the occasion of revelation and exegesis of the verse of *mubāhala*. Here, we will suffice with just one narration as an example:

In the "Virtues of the Companions" section of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, an interesting and striking narration has been reported from Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ:

Sa'd says: "I went to meet Mu'āwiya. Mu'āwiya said: 'I have heard that you do not curse Ali! Why don't you revile and insult Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib?'"[4]

In response to Mu'āwiya, Sa'd said: "I have heard three statements from the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) about Ali (a.s.) that prevent me from complying with your request:

A- When the Prophet (s.a.w.) was setting out for the battle of Tabūk and appointed Ali as his successor in Medina, Ali asked him: 'Why are you leaving me in Medina and not taking me with you to battle?' The Prophet replied:

"Are you not content that your relation to me is like the relation of Aaron to Moses; just as Aaron was the brother and successor of Moses, you too are my brother and successor."

B- During the battle of Khaybar, various individuals went to conquer the fortress of Khaybar and returned disappointed, until one night the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"Tomorrow I will give the banner to a man who does not tire of battle and never turns his back on the enemy!"

All the companions were waiting to see whom the Prophet meant. The Prophet looked at his companions and surveyed them all, but did not see Ali. He asked where Ali was.

They said: He is suffering from an eye ailment and is resting.

He said: "Bring Ali here!"

Ali came to the Prophet's presence. The Prophet applied some of his saliva to Ali's eyes, and by the blessing of the Prophet's saliva and by God's permission, Ali's eyes were healed. Then he gave him the banner, and Ali (a.s.), through an interesting series of events, conquered the fortress of Khaybar!

C- In the event of *mubāhala*, the Prophet (s.a.w.) went to meet the Christians of Najrān accompanied by Ali, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn (a.s.), and prepared for the mutual imprecation.

After relating the above matters to Muʿāwiya, Saʿd said: Muʿāwiya! Given these virtues that I have heard from the Prophet (s.a.w.) regarding Ali, how can I curse him?!

Muʿāwiya fell silent and regretted his words.[5]

Who are "our sons", "our women" and "our souls"?

Regarding the meaning of "our women" (*nisāʾanā*) referring only to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) daughter Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ (a.s.), there appears to be no disagreement between us and our Sunni brothers, just as both Shi'i and Sunni scholars have unanimously explained "our sons" (*abnāʾanā*) as referring to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (a.s.), and there is no difference of opinion that Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusayn (a.s.) are included in "our sons."

Therefore, the main focus of discussion revolves around the exegesis of "our souls" (*anfusanā*), and for this reason, we need to discuss this phrase in more detail.

The late Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī, in his valuable book *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, states:

"The exegetes are in consensus that 'our sons' refers to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (a.s.), 'our women' refers to Fāṭima (a.s.), and 'our souls' refers to Ali (a.s.)."

The exegetes of the Qur'an (both Shi'i and Sunni) are in agreement that "our sons" refers to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (a.s.), "our women" refers to Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ (a.s.), and "our souls" refers to Ali (a.s.).

Āyatollāh al-ʿUẓmā Marʿashī cites this point from about sixty books (from Sunni sources) in the footnotes of this book .[6] This means that the matter is so clear and evident that it is reflected in all Sunni books.

However, unfortunately, despite all these narrations, a few Sunni exegetes, who have fallen into baseless prejudice and personal inter-

pretation, have made astonishing statements in their exegesis of this noble verse. Consider two examples:

1- Al-Ālūsī in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, after acknowledging that no one other than Ali, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn (a.s.) accompanied the Prophet (s.a.w.) in the event of *mubāhala* ("mutual imprecation"), and emphasizing that no believing person should doubt this matter, addresses the argument of Shi'i scholars and claims that "our souls" (*anfusanā*) refers to the Prophet himself, and that Ali is included in "our sons" (*abnā'anā*) because in Arabic literature, a son-in-law can also be called a son![7]

The response to this statement is very clear, because according to this noble verse, the Prophet invited "our sons" (*abnā'anā*), "our souls" (*anfusanā*), and "our women" (*nisā'anā*). If "our souls" (*anfusanā*) refers to the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself, does it make sense to invite oneself? Given that the Qur'an contains the most eloquent of words, it certainly would not make such an ineloquent statement nor command the Prophet to invite himself. Therefore, "our souls" (*anfusanā*) definitely does not refer to the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself. Moreover, we have not seen in Arabic literature that a son-in-law is addressed as a son, and such usage would be very unfamiliar and metaphorical.

Do not be too surprised by such opinions; this is the result of baseless prejudices. Such prejudices reach a point where some people are willing to impose interpretations on the Qur'an just to preserve their incorrect beliefs!

2- Even more surprising than Al-Ālūsī's statement is Muḥammad 'Abduh's view in *al-Manār*. In *al-Manār*, when he reaches the exegesis of the verse of *mubāhala*, he writes:

"The narrations agree that the Prophet (s.a.w.) chose Ali, Fāṭima, and their two sons for the *mubāhala*, and they interpret the word"our women" (*nisā'anā*) to refer to Fāṭima and the word "our souls" (*anfusanā*) to refer only to Ali, and the sources of these narrations are the Shi'a, and their intention in this is well-known."[8]

This statement from Muḥammad 'Abduh is truly strange, and its beginning and end contradict each other, because at the start he

claims consensus and agreement of narrations, and at the end, he attributes all of them to the Shi'a!

Moreover, (as mentioned before) the latter statement is incorrect, because most of these narrations - contrary to his claim - have been transmitted by Sunni sources.

In response to these baseless statements, one can only express regret and sorrow.

In any case, the verse of *mubāhala*, with the explanations provided, is one of the definitive and explicit verses that clearly indicates the leadership (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) and his children (a.s.).

Question: It is true that the verse of *mubāhala* is considered a virtue and honor for the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), but what connection does it have with the matter of his leadership (*wilāya*) and authority, that you have discussed it here as one of the verses related to leadership (*wilāya*)?

Answer: As mentioned before, the meaning of "our souls" (*anfusanā*) in the verse of *mubāhala* refers to Ali (a.s.) himself. When the Prophet (s.a.w.) called Ali (a.s.) his own soul and addressed him as his "self" (*nafs*), is the literal meaning intended, or is it meant as a metaphorical elevation of status?

Undoubtedly, the literal meaning is not intended; that is, Ali is not the Prophet! Rather, the meaning is that Ali (a.s.) is like the Prophet (s.a.w.) in virtues, perfections, and stations - in bravery, valor, courage, piety, selflessness, and in short, all perfections and stations like the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). The result is that Ali (a.s.) occupies the station next to the Prophet (s.a.w.) and follows directly after him in stations and perfections.

Considering this point, if after the Prophet (s.a.w.) a successor and deputy is to be appointed for him by God, or if the Islamic community is to choose someone for this purpose, should they not select someone who is equal to the Prophet, or at least next to him in rank?

Should not the person chosen by the people or appointed by God be like the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) in virtues and perfections, especially in piety and infallibility (*'iṣma*)?

And if, despite the existence of such a person, others are chosen, would not reason consider such an act reprehensible and wrong?

Therefore, from the application of the phrase "our souls" (*anfusanā*) to the person of Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), one can build a bridge to leadership (*wilāya*) and *imāma*, and thereby prove his leadership.

O Lord! Make us grateful for the unique and great blessing of the leadership of the People of the House (a.s.), and include us in the grace and favor of these noble ones in this world, and their intercession in the hereafter.

1. One who is willing to participate in *mubāhala* must possess two principles:

2. *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 2/16 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/48).

3. *Ma'rifat 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, Egyptian edition, p. 50 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/48).

4. This statement shows the ultimate oppression against Ali (a.s.) and the height of the Bani Umayyah's hatred and enmity towards him. They were so vile and malicious that they promoted cursing and condemning Ali, even though he was accepted by all Muslims at least as the fourth caliph, to such an extent that if someone did not participate in this act, they would be held accountable! It is surprising that some Sunni brothers defend the Bani Umayyah, and especially Muawiyah at their head, despite such crimes, and refer to this source of evil as "our master Muawiyah!"

5. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4/187, hadith 32.

6. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/46.

7. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 3/189.

8. *Al-Manār*, 3/322.

9

THEY GIVE FOOD, FOR THE LOVE OF HIM, TO THE NEEDY, THE ORPHAN AND THE PRISONER...

"Indeed the pious will drink from a cup seasoned with Kafur, a spring where the servants of God drink, which they make to gush forth as they please. They fulfil their vows and fear a day whose ill will be widespread. They give food, for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan and the prisoner, [saying,] 'We feed you only for the sake of God. We do not want any reward from you nor any thanks. Indeed we fear from our Lord a day, frowning and fateful.'"

(*Sūrat al-Insān*, verses 5-10)

Overview of the Discussion

One of the important and instructive virtues of Ali (a.s.), or rather one of the virtues of the People of the House of infallibility and purity (a.s.), is presented in the verses of *Sūrat al-Insān*. Eighteen verses out of the thirty-one verses of this chapter speak about this unparalleled virtue. Some of these eighteen verses discuss the main event itself, while fourteen other verses discuss the reward and recompense for the great deed of that noble family. The explanation of these matters will be presented in the upcoming discussions.

The Context of Revelation

Many books have discussed the context of revelation for these verses. The late ʿAllāma Amīnī in *al-Ghadīr* has cited this context of revelation from 34 Sunni books ,[1] and the late Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī has quoted it from 36 of their books .[2] Therefore, the following context of revelation approaches the level of successive transmission (*tawātur*). The summary of the context of revelation that all the above sources agree upon is as follows:

Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusayn (a.s.) fell ill in their childhood. The Prophet (s.a.w.) came to visit his sick grandchildren at the house of Ali and Fatima (a.s.). When he saw the illness of his beloved grandchildren, he said to Ali (a.s.), "Make a vow so that God may cure your sick ones!"

Ali (a.s.) immediately said, "O God, if my children are cured, I will fast for three days."

Fatima (a.s.) also made the same vow. Even Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusayn (a.s.) – despite their young age – following their parents, made the same vow. Fiḍḍa (the maidservant) who was present there also – presumably – made the same vow.

It was not long before the illness of these two beloved ones of the Prophet was cured, and the People of the House (a.s.) set out to fulfill their vow. They fasted on the first day. Ali (a.s.) obtained some barley for breaking their fast during these three days. They ground it and divided it into three portions. They made dough from one portion to prepare bread for breaking the fast on the first day, making enough for all those who were fasting. At the time of breaking the fast, they heard a voice from behind the courtyard door. The family members went outside and saw someone who addressed them thus:

"Peace be upon you, O People of the House!"

Ali (a.s.) gave his portion of bread to that poor person, and Fatima (a.s.) did the same. The rest of the family members also gave their portions to that needy person, and that night they broke their fast with water .[3]

The next day, they fasted again and prepared bread with

another third of the barley flour. As they were ready to break their fast, they again heard someone's voice from outside the house saying:

"Peace be upon you, O People of the House!" They went outside. They asked him: "Who are you and what do you need?"

He said: "I am an orphan from among the orphans of this city. I am hungry, please feed me." Again, Ali (a.s.) gave his portion to that orphan, and the others did the same with complete sincerity and for the sake of God's pleasure. And like the first night, they broke their fast with water!

On the third day, they fasted again according to their vow, and the same story of the first and second day was repeated. This time, a captive [4] asked for help. Ali (a.s.) and all the family members gave their food for breaking the fast to that captive person. They broke their fast with water on the third night as well, and thus fulfilled their vow.

The next day, the Prophet (s.a.w.) saw Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusayn (a.s.) in a weakened and exhausted state, trembling from extreme weakness, and he became distressed at this condition. Moreover, Fatima's (a.s.) sunken eyes increased the Prophet's (s.a.w.) distress and sorrow. He asked Ali (a.s.):

"O Ali! Why have the children become so weak and exhausted? Why has my daughter Fatima's face become so pale?"

Ali (a.s.) recounted the events to him, and at that moment Gabriel descended and brought the verses of *Sūrat al-Insān*.

Commentary and Exegesis

The Five Characteristics of the People of the House (a.s.)

Four verses from the eighteen verses discuss the fundamental actions of this noble family, while the other fourteen verses describe the reward and recompense for this memorable and unparalleled sacrifice. First, consider the explanation and exegesis of the first four

verses; in these verses, five prominent characteristics of the People of the House (a.s.) are presented:

1. Fulfilling Vows and Covenants

"They fulfill their vows" (*yūfūna bi-l-nadhr*) - The first valuable action of this family, which should be a model for all Shi'is, is that they fulfilled their vow. However, some Shi'is make vows during times of hardship, suffering, affliction, calamity, illness, and weakness, but when their problems are resolved and the time comes to fulfill their vow, they make various excuses to avoid fulfilling it. Sometimes they doubt whether they recited the vow formula correctly! Sometimes they doubt whether they recited the vow formula at all! In short, they avoid fulfilling their vow with any excuse. Like the person who was caught in a dangerous situation where his chances of survival were very slim. In that dangerous state, he made a substantial vow and happened to survive. When he escaped the danger, he addressed the shrine to which he had made the vow saying: "O shrine! I made such a substantial vow in those dangerous moments out of fear for my life - why did you believe me and save me?!" Indeed, some of us Muslims exemplify this noble verse:

"When they board the ship, they invoke God putting exclusive faith in Him, but when He delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [to Him]"[5]

However, the People of the House (a.s.) were not like this, and they fulfilled not only their vows but all their commitments, because one of the signs of faith[6] and marks of a true Muslim is fulfilling vows and commitments, even if it is to one's own detriment.

2. Fear of the Day of Judgment

"And fear a day whose ill will be widespread" - The second prominent characteristic of the People of the House (a.s.) that God mentions in this event is that: "they fear the resurrection and the Day of Judgment." Not because anyone will be wronged on that day, but

they fear God's court of justice, for all human deeds, both small and large, will be called to account in this court. A court whose standard is these two noble verses: "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it" is truly fearsome, because in this court they will examine everything meticulously, though not even the slightest injustice will be done to anyone. Indeed, God's court of justice on the Day of Judgment is extensive and all-encompassing, including men and women, young and old, rich and poor, learned and ignorant - in short, all human beings. Faith and belief in such a court places one in a state of fear and awe.

3. Caring for the Needy

"They give food, for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan and the prisoner" - The third characteristic of the People of the House (a.s.) in these noble verses, which is the main focus of this discussion, is caring for society's needy. This noble family would give to the poor and needy even what they themselves needed. They helped the "needy" (*miskīn*), the "orphan" (*yatīm*), and the "prisoner" (*asīr*). This noble verse points to three groups of society's needy.

a."Needy" (*miskīn*); this word comes from the root "stillness" (*sukūn*), meaning that poverty and destitution have placed such pressure on the needy person that they have become ground-bound and stuck to the earth! Muslims and believers must take the hands of the deprived, the poor, and the needy who are unable to provide for their basic needs, and share with them the resources and blessings that God has placed at their disposal.

b."Orphan" (*yatīm*); an orphan is someone who has lost their guardian. Although an orphan may not be materially needy, they are spiritually in need of affection and love. In one of the recent devastating earthquakes that had heavy casualties, from a large family of 50 people, only one person survived! This person had lost their father, mother, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, and in short, all their

relatives. Such a person is in desperate need of affection and love, otherwise this pain alone would bring them down.

c."Prisoner" (*asīr*); prisoner has a clear and obvious meaning, referring to someone who has been separated from their home, dwelling, family, city, and homeland, and remains alone and destitute in another city. A prisoner may have been wealthy and affluent in their homeland, but after captivity, like other needy people, they deserve help and kindness.

In summary, faithful Muslims should help all vulnerable groups in society according to their means and abilities. Today, some of the three social groups mentioned above, who were the recipients of the kindness of the People of the House (a.s.), may no longer exist; however, there are other needy groups who desperately require assistance: cancer patients, lepers, and other patients with incurable diseases; prisoners; young women who cannot marry due to lack of dowry; and other needy groups should be shown kindness and care.

O God! How selflessly did the family of Ali (a.s.) give! Are we like them too?

Do we know how our neighbors are faring? Are we aware of how our neighbors spend their fast-breaking and pre-dawn meals? Do we have any information about the condition of our relatives, family members, and acquaintances? If the answer to these questions is - God forbid - negative, can we claim to be Shi'i?

4. Sincerity

"We feed you only for the sake of God. We do not want any reward from you nor any thanks."

The fourth virtue of Ali, his wife, and two sons, which is an extraordinarily valuable virtue, is the matter of their sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*). They say:

"The help we give to you - the destitute (*masākīn*), orphans (*aytām*), prisoners (*usarā'*), and other needy people in society - is solely and exclusively for gaining God's pleasure, with no other moti-

vation whatsoever. Therefore, we seek no reward from you and do not even expect gratitude or thanks!"

Let us review these statements once more - can ordinary people make such a claim?

Even more remarkable, if the needy were to respond with insolence and insults instead of reward and thanks, it would still make no difference to that family!

Sincerity is a very precious and rare gem, which is why Islam emphasizes the quality and nature of deeds, not their quantity and numbers. That is, one sincere unit of prayer is more valuable to God than thousands of units without sincerity.

5. Fear of God!

"Indeed we fear from our Lord a day, frowning and fateful."

Their fifth characteristic is fear of God. You might ask:

The second characteristic discussed fear of the resurrection and Day of Judgment, and here fear of God is mentioned - are these two different?

The answer: Fear of God need not be due to fear of hell, the Day of Judgment, and its terrifying and painful torments. Rather, it can be fear arising from God's greatness.

When a believing person contemplates God's greatness, fear encompasses their entire being and their body trembles, just as when one goes to meet an important personality and wants to say something to them, the greatness of that personality might overwhelm them and render them unable to speak - even if that personality is an extremely kind, well-mannered, and approachable person. Therefore, the fifth characteristic is different from the second characteristic, and fear of God means fear of the greatness and magnificence of the merciful God.

Verses of Reward

As previously mentioned, fourteen verses out of the eighteen verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr*, which relate to the story of sacrifice and feeding by the family of Ali (a.s.), speak of the abundant rewards for this unparalleled sacrifice. Certainly, nowhere else in the Qur'an and for no other deed have so many rewards been mentioned. In one sense, 15 rewards are mentioned consecutively, and if we consider the details, we can count up to 20 rewards mentioned in these fourteen verses! We will enumerate these rewards under 12 headings. However, before explaining these rewards, it is necessary to present an essential introduction:

Comparing Worldly and Otherworldly Rewards!

Undoubtedly, the rewards of the hereafter differ from worldly rewards. Although worldly terms and expressions are used to explain and describe those rewards, their meaning and content are otherworldly in nature. Therefore, what we hear and imagine about otherworldly blessings is merely a shadow of the realities of the hereafter, and we should not expect to fully comprehend the true nature of those blessings in this world. Just as a fetus in its mother's womb, even if it were to be Ibn Sīnā, cannot comprehend the realities of this world, no matter how well its mother might explain them - it can only imagine a shadow of worldly realities. For this reason, we read in a tradition from the Prophet (s.a.w.): "God says: I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has not occurred to any human heart."[7]

Therefore, a word may have one meaning for us in this world, but that same word may have a different, and sometimes even opposite, meaning when referring to heavenly blessings. More explanations on this topic will be provided in future discussions. With this introduction in mind, let us explain the twelve blessings:

The Twelve Heavenly Blessings!

1.Peace - "So God saved them from the ills of that day, and granted them freshness and joy" - The first blessing bestowed upon them is the blessing of peace. God removes the difficulties of the Day of Judgment from them and fills them with happiness and joy. The fact that peace is mentioned as the first blessing indicates that it is a precious blessing, and this is indeed true. Peace in this world and the hereafter is among the greatest and most important blessings.

There are people who have access to all kinds of resources in this world but lack peace; all facilities and blessings become instruments of torment and suffering for such people. This is why many wealthy people commit suicide. It is said that in one of the American cities, there is a forest known as the Suicide Forest! The majority of those who frequent this forest are wealthy people who have everything in the world except peace! In contrast, we see people who, with minimal resources and just the basic necessities of life, live the most comfortable and peaceful lives because they are at peace.

If you ask how this valuable and great blessing can be obtained?

We say: God, in verse 82 of *Sūrat al-An'ām*, considers the blessing of security and peace to be accessible to people of faith:

"Those who have faith and do not taint their faith with wrongdoing—for such there shall be safety, and they are the [rightly] guided."

And in verse 28 of *Sūrat al-Ra'd*, the remembrance of God and not becoming heedless of it is described as a constant source of grace, blessing, and comfort, and a means of tranquility and security: "those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of God. Look! The hearts find rest in God's remembrance!"

1.Heavenly Gardens - "And He rewarded them for their patience with a garden and [garments of] silk" - Another reward for the righteous are gardens of paradise, where everything is different from the gardens of this world. Gardens beneath which rivers flow; gardens that have no autumn and bear fruit in all seasons; trees from which the inhabitants of paradise need not trouble themselves to pick fruit,

rather whenever they wish, the branches of fruit trees present themselves to them.

2.Peace and Comfort - "reclining therein on couches" - The term "couches" (*arā 'ik*, singular: *arīka*) originally referred to the bridal bed placed in the wedding chamber; later it came to refer to all beautiful couches. The inhabitants of paradise recline on beautiful couches in the heavenly gardens and enjoy the blessings of paradise. The expression "reclining" (*muttaki 'īn*) is an elegant and beautiful expression, because when a person is at peace and has peace of mind, they recline comfortably, but if they are anxious and worried, they cannot sit and recline comfortably, but constantly shift from one position to another.

3.A Moderate Climate and Pleasant Air - "They will find in it neither any [scorching] sun, nor any [biting] cold" - The climate of paradise is very moderate; there is neither scorching sun there, requiring cooling devices, nor severe cold, requiring heating devices; rather, it is always spring-like, accompanied by the soul-refreshing breeze of spring.

Undoubtedly, in such a moderate climate, reclining on cushions, upon beautiful heavenly couches, beneath fruit-laden trees, brings an indescribable pleasure.

Question: In these verses, the existence of the sun in paradise is negated, yet in subsequent verses, there is mention of the shade of paradisiacal trees. If there is no sun in paradise, how can the shade of trees be discussed? Is there not a contradiction between these verses?

Answer: First: The Qur'an does not say "there is no sun in paradise," rather it states that the sun is not visible, meaning that the trees of paradise are so dense and abundant that its inhabitants cannot see the sun through them.

Second: When it says "they will not see any sun therein" (*lā yarawna fīhā shamsan*), it means there is no scorching or harmful sun, but it does not negate the existence of a moderate sun. Therefore, there is no contradiction in the above verses.

1.Shades and Fruits - "Its shades will be close over them and its clusters [of fruits] will be hanging low"

2.Young Attendants Ready to Serve - "And there will circulate among them immortal youths"

3.Extraordinarily Beautiful Garments - "Upon them will be cloaks of green silk and brocade"

Even garments that were forbidden for men in this world will be permissible to use in the hereafter.

1.Ornaments[8] - "and they will be adorned with bracelets of silver"

2.The Highest Level of Hospitality - "They will be served around with vessels of silver and goblets of crystal" - The type of vessel from which one eats is very important. If the finest food is served in an unclean or unsuitable vessel, one's appetite disappears; conversely, if ordinary food is served in a beautiful, clean, and suitable vessel, one's appetite doubles. For this reason, various types of beautiful and ornamental vessels, both small and large, made of silver, will be at the disposal of the inhabitants of paradise.

Of course, the silver of that world is different from the silver of this world. Those silver vessels are as transparent as crystal!

1.Various Blessings - "As you look, you will see there bliss" - When they enter paradise and look at the blessings that have been placed at their disposal, they will observe various types of blessings that are beyond description.

2.Great Dominion - "and a great kingdom" - The inhabitants of paradise will have such extensive resources in terms of servants, facilities, and position that it will be as if each of them has their own independent country and separate sovereignty.

3.Various Paradisiacal Drinks - One of the blessings that God has repeatedly promised to the inhabitants of paradise in the Qur'an is various types of paradisiacal drinks. These are drinks that not only do not rob one of intellect and consciousness but bring joy, vitality, and tranquility. In the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr*, three types of drinks are mentioned: A- The drink of camphor (*kāfūr*) - "Indeed the pious will drink from a cup seasoned with Kafur" - The righteous and good people in paradise will drink from a cup that is mixed with the sweet fragrance of camphor.

In Persian, camphor (*kāfūr*) refers to the disinfectant substance

used in one of the ritual washings of the deceased, mixed with water to disinfect the body. However, in Arabic, it has a broader meaning and refers to anything fragrant and aromatic. Therefore, the drink of camphor refers to a drink with a special fragrance, such that when the inhabitants of paradise drink it, they also derive pleasure from its aroma.

"They will be served therein with a cup of a drink seasoned with Zanjabil"

"Their Lord will give them to drink a pure drink"

The expressions used regarding these three drinks are worth noting. Regarding the drink of camphor, the term "they drink" (*yashrabūn*) is used, meaning the inhabitants of paradise drink this type of drink with their own hands. Regarding the drink of ginger (*zanjabīl*), the term "they are given to drink" (*yusqawn*) is used, meaning the paradisiacal servants serve this drink to the inhabitants. And regarding the pure drink (*sharāb ṭahūr*), the expression "their Lord will give them to drink" (*saqāhum rabbuhum*) is used, meaning God Himself serves this drink to the inhabitants of paradise!

What is the Pure Drink?

In a tradition, we read that when the inhabitants of paradise drink the pure drink:

"It purifies them from everything other than God"[9]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) describes the effects of the pure drink in another tradition:

"Through it, God purifies their hearts from envy"[10]

Envy (*ḥasad*) is one of the afflictions of human life. Sometimes a person has all blessings at their disposal, yet still cannot bear to see others' comfort and cannot tolerate that others also have means and live in ease. Envy is like a prison that deprives the envious person of freedom, comfort, and peace. In any case, one of the effects of the pure drink (*sharāb ṭahūr*) is to remove and uproot this ugly moral trait.

Question: Various blessings are mentioned in these verses, and

even the minutest details of some blessings are precisely described. However, one of the paradisiacal blessings, which comes to mind first whenever the Qur'an speaks of heavenly blessings, is not mentioned in the above verses! Yes, your guess is correct - in these verses there is no mention of the *ḥūr al-'ayn* (maidens of paradise). What indeed is the reason for this?

Answer: Some exegetes[11] believe that since these verses speak about Fāṭima al-Zahrā' (a.s.), God, out of respect for her, did not mention the *ḥūr al-'ayn*. This itself is another proof that these verses were revealed concerning Ali and his family. Otherwise, what other reasonable explanation could there be for not mentioning the *ḥūr al-'ayn* among the paradisiacal blessings?

In summary, the twelve blessings mentioned within the fourteen verses of *Sūrat al-Insān* are specific to the righteous (*abrār*) and the virtuous, at the apex of which pyramid are Ali, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn (a.s.).

Excuses! And Their Answers

Unfortunately, regarding verses about the virtues of the Household (a.s.) and verses about divine authority (*wilāya*) and leadership (*imāma*), numerous excuses are raised that are not observed even 1/100th as much for other Qur'anic verses or Islamic matters! Of course, the philosophy behind these excuses is clear; because if they were to accept that this collection of verses concerns Ali and the other Imams (a.s.), they would have to believe in the immediate leadership and succession of Ali (a.s.) and his children. Because - as we have said many times - if leadership is by divine appointment, God would never turn to others when the most virtuous, most knowledgeable, most courageous, and in short, the best Muslim individual exists, as this is what His wisdom requires. And if it were by election, rational people should choose the best individual, and would not turn to others when the best exists. This conclusion does not align with the prejudices and base desires of some people; therefore, they try to somehow diminish or erase the verses of divine authority and

virtues, so they do not suffer from guilty conscience. For this reason, they make excuses; consider a few examples:

1. *Sūrat al-Insān* is Meccan!

Sūrat al-Dahr was not revealed in Medina, but rather it is Meccan. And we know that Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusayn (a.s.) were born in Medina in the second and third years after migration; therefore, at the time of the revelation of *Sūrat al-Dahr*, these two noble ones had not yet been born. Thus, the aforementioned occasion of revelation does not correspond with *Sūrat al-Dahr*. On this basis, some have said: The occasion of revelation for these verses is as follows:

A black servant came to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and said: "I wish to be with you in Paradise! But I am black and you are white, so this wish cannot be fulfilled." The Prophet (s.a.w.) replied: "Do not worry, on the Day of Resurrection you will become so white and luminous that you will be visible from miles away." Then the above verses were revealed regarding this servant![12] In short, given that *Sūrat al-Dahr* is Meccan ,[13] the occasion of revelation that you have mentioned does not correspond with this chapter.

Answer: Firstly, many exegetes, traditionists, and historians believe that *Sūrat al-Dahr* was revealed in Medina, and only a very small, limited, and countable number have expressed a contrary opinion and accepted that this chapter is Meccan.

The scholars who believe in and testify to this chapter being Medinan fall into two groups: One group has explicitly stated that this chapter was revealed in Medina, and the other group has not explicitly stated this, but they have included the occasion of revelation that we narrated regarding Ali (a.s.) and his family members in their commentary on the verses of *Sūrat al-Insān*. This means that *Sūrat al-Dahr* is Medinan.

Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī, in the third volume of *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, page 157 onwards, has mentioned the names of these scholars, some of whom we will reference:

1- Zamakhsharī, who is among the well-known Sunni exegetes

and their prominent figures, has explicitly stated in his famous book *al-Kashshāf* that *Sūrat al-Insān* is Medinan.[14]

2- Wāḥidī, another prominent Sunni scholar, has chosen the same view in *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*.[15]

3- Ibn al-Jawzī, another Sunni scholar, also believes that *Sūrat al-Dahr* is Medinan.[16]

4- Ganjī, in *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, has also chosen this view.[17]

5- Ṭabarī, in *Dhakhā'ir al-'Uqbā*, holds the same belief.[18]

6- Ālūsī also believes that this chapter is Medinan.[19]

7- Fakhr Rāzī, one of the most renowned exegetes of the Sunni world, has also chosen this view.[20]

8- The famous exegete Qurṭubī has included this statement in his commentary:

"Tha'labī mentions in his exegesis: The exegetes have said that it was revealed concerning Ali, Fatima, and their servant whose name was Fiḍḍa."[21]

In summary, according to the testimony of Islamic scholars, some of whom we have mentioned, *Sūrat al-Dahr* was undoubtedly revealed in Medina.

Secondly: From the noble verse "They give food, for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan and the prisoner," it can be understood that this chapter is Medinan; because there were no prisoners in Mecca. Rather, this matter came about in Medina after the migration of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the Muslims to Medina, and after the legislation of jihad and the beginning of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) battles. Therefore, the word "prisoner" (*asīr*) itself is the best evidence that *Sūrat al-Dahr* is Medinan.

As for the occasion of revelation mentioned regarding the black servant, it has no correspondence with the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr*; because in that occasion of revelation, there is no mention of feeding the needy, the orphan, and the prisoner. Therefore, such an occasion of revelation contradicts the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr*, and whatever contradicts the Qur'an is not worthy of consideration.

2. A Lamp Required for the Home is Forbidden for the Mosque!

Question: Is it appropriate that Ali (a.s.) gave his food and that of his family, who were his dependents, to a beggar? This is while God, in verse 219 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, in response to the Muslims' question to the Prophet (s.a.w.) about what they should spend, says:

"Say, 'All that is surplus.'"

If the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr* concern Ali (a.s.) and his family, why did he - contrary to the above verse - give in charity from what he himself needed?

Answer: It is quite astonishing that someone who calls himself a scholar would make such statements! For these objections show his ignorance and lack of knowledge! To explain: "spending" (*infāq*) is one thing and "selfless giving" (*īthār*) is another. Unfortunately, the person who raised this objection has not understood the difference between "spending" (*infāq*) and "selfless giving" (*īthār*)!

In verse 9 of *Sūrat al-Ḥashr*, in description of the Helpers (*anṣār*), we read:

"And they prefer [others] over themselves, even though they are in need."

The aspiration of some believers is so high that they have reached the station of "selfless giving" (*īthār*) and despite their own dire need, they spend [in charity]. Regarding the circumstances of the revelation of the above verse, it is narrated:

"A needy man came to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and said: 'I am hungry, I am poor, I am in need, help me!'

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said to one of his companions: 'Go to our house, if you find anything that could help this person, bring it so we can give it to him.' That person went to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) house and returned, having found nothing!

The Prophet then addressed his companions saying: 'Which one of you can host this person tonight and give him food?'

One of the companions declared his readiness for this task and went home with the needy person. Upon entering his house, he

checked the kitchen and found nothing except the food his wife had prepared for him and his children!

The man said: 'My wife! Put the children to sleep before dinner! Then bring the food.'

His wife put the hungry children to sleep and then spread the tablecloth. After the meal was ready, the host turned off the lamp. He then sat down with his needy guest to eat. He would extend his hand toward the food and bring it near his mouth without taking any, so that the guest would not realize he wasn't eating and would eat his fill.

Thus, he and his family slept hungry that night, selflessly giving their needed food to that poor person.

The next day, when he came to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), as soon as the Prophet saw him, he said:

"What did you do with your guest last night?" The man recounted the entire story to the Prophet.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Due to your selfless giving (*īthār*) last night, a verse of the Qur'an was revealed to me."

The Prophet then recited the above verse .[22]

Therefore, whoever raises such objections has not studied all the verses of the Qur'an, otherwise they would have known that selfless giving (*īthār*) is a station far higher than charitable spending (*infāq*), which not everyone has the fortune to achieve, and is among the special qualities of true believers.

Furthermore, in the story of *Sūrat al-Dahr*, Ali (a.s.) only gave his own food to the poor person, not the food of the entire family. Then Fatima (a.s.) also willingly offered her food to the needy person, and Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (a.s.) also did this willingly. This is the pinnacle of selfless giving that is praised in the Qur'an and is among the highest virtues.

As for the verse "Say: whatever is surplus" (*qul al-'afw*), there are two views. The first is that "surplus" (*'afw*) refers to items beyond one's needs .[23] However, the second possibility is that: "surplus is the good portion of wealth" ,[24] and we should help the needy from this type of wealth, not that we should give the poor whatever is extra and

unused, because in that case we will not achieve true righteousness (*birr*), as God says: "You will never attain piety until you spend out of what you hold dear" .[25]

Therefore, the verse "Say: whatever is surplus" most likely does not recommend giving away unused and excess wealth, but rather recommends selecting from the best to give to the poor, and this is the same selfless giving that is referenced in the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr*.

In light of the above points, the verse "Say: whatever is surplus" not only does not contradict or conflict with the occasion of revelation of the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr*, but is actually in harmony with it and confirms it.

3. Are the Verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr* General or Specific?

Question: Are the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr*, which were revealed describing the "righteous" (*abrār*) and refer to the rewards of the "good ones" in the hereafter, specific to Ali (a.s.) and his wife and children, or are they general and include all those who possess the qualities of the righteous? If the second possibility is correct ,[26] then why have you restricted these verses to the Prophet's family?

Answer: Firstly, there are signs and indications in these verses that make it impossible to apply them to all righteous people. Rather, according to these signs, we must apply the mentioned verses to specific righteous individuals. For example, we learn from these verses that the righteous people referred to had made a vow, and when fulfilling their vow, they performed a great act of selfless giving (*īthār*) and helped the needy, orphans, and prisoners. Therefore, these verses do not include those righteous people who had not made a vow and do not possess the above-mentioned characteristics.

Secondly, even assuming these verses are general and include all righteous people, they undoubtedly include those for whom they were originally revealed! In fact, Ali (a.s.), Fatima, and their children (a.s.) are the most exemplary and highest manifestations of the righteous and good ones.

In summary, the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr* are in any case among the virtues of the People of the Household (a.s.), among the valuable merits of this family, and among the signs of the Imamate and immediate succession of Ali (a.s.).

Messages from the Verse

1. The Importance of Helping Those in Need

The core essence of these eighteen verses, and what led to these twelve important rewards, was the matter of human assistance to those in need, and this indicates the special attention and extraordinary importance that God has given to this matter.

Anyone who seeks to be included in the merciful Lord's special attention must help the poor and destitute. And if one goes beyond this stage and gives selflessly (*īthār*) from what they themselves need, undoubtedly God's special attention will encompass them.

To better understand the special importance of helping those in need, consider these two narrations:

1- Imam Ali (a.s.) in a letter addressed to his son Imam Hasan al-Mujtabā (a.s.) says:

"Know that ahead of you lies a difficult ascent. The one who travels light will fare better than the one who carries a heavy burden. Your descent will inevitably lead either to Paradise or to Hell. Therefore, prepare provisions for yourself before your descent, and ready your resting place before your arrival. For after death, there is no opportunity to seek forgiveness, nor any return to this world."[27]

The best way to traverse these difficult passes and the most suitable provisions for the terrifying moments of the Day of Resurrection is helping the poor and being charitable to those in need. This act is, in reality, like handing over these provisions to them in this world, which they will carry and return to us in the hereafter. Could there be any transaction more profitable and better than this?

2- The late Muḥaddith Kulaynī, one of the great Shi'i scholars,

has recorded the following Hadith from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) in *al-Kāfī*:

"There are three things - whoever brings one of them to God, God will make Paradise obligatory for them: giving charity despite poverty (*infāq min iqtār*), showing cheerfulness to all people of the world, and being fair in dealing with oneself."[28]

These are three acts that if someone performs any one of them for God's pleasure, God will make Paradise obligatory for them:

1.Giving charity during hardship and need[29]

2.Being cheerful (not just with Muslims, but) with all people of the world (whether Muslim or non-Muslim)[30]

3.Looking at one's own rights and those of others with the same eye

The importance of viewing one's own rights and those of others with the same eye is emphasized in another narration:

"God loves the Muslim who loves for his brother what he loves for himself and dislikes for him what he dislikes for himself."[31]

2. Quantity is Not the Criterion for Action!

Another important message from the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr* is that in Islam, the criterion for value is the quality and nature of the action, not its quantity or amount! For all that this noble family gave in charity was no more than a few kilos of barley, but because this act was coupled with sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and was done solely for God's pleasure, the value of their deed was elevated to such a degree that unprecedented rewards were designated for their action in the Qur'an.

Sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) truly works miracles, sometimes multiplying a deed a thousandfold, sometimes a millionfold, sometimes a billionfold, and sometimes potentially making it as valuable as the worship of all jinn and humans until the Day of Resurrection.[32] The sign of sincerity is that the sincere person expects no reward or even gratitude from anyone except God; and sometimes sincerity reaches such a level that gratitude and abuse become equal to them! They are

neither elated and intoxicated by the former, nor despondent and regretful from the latter. How fortunate are such sincere people.

3. The Reflection of the Verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr* in Poetry

The occasion of revelation of the verses of *Sūrat al-Dahr* regarding Ali (a.s.) and his family (a.s.) is so clear, evident, and definitive that it has even been reflected in poetry.

Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Muṭṭalibī al-Shāfi'ī, one of the Sunni leaders ,[33] has composed poetry about Ali (a.s.). In part of his poetry, we read:

"Until when, until when, and how long Will I be reproached for loving this youth? Was Fāṭima married to anyone but him? And was '*Hal atā*' revealed about anyone else?"[34]

1. *Al-Ghadīr*, 3/107. Here are ten sources from which *Al-Ghadīr* has quoted this occasion of revelation: 1. *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*, p. 64; 2. *Al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, 3/42; 3. *Al-Kashf wa-l-Bayān*, pp. 427-307; 4. *Manāqib Khwārazmī*, p. 180; 5. *Maṭālib al-Sa'ūl*, p. 31; 6. *Nūr al-Abṣār*, pp. 14-12; 7. *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 5/338; 8. *Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 10/268; 9. *Al-Iṣāba*, 4/387; 10. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 6/299.

2. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/157 onwards. Here are ten sources from which *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq* has quoted this occasion of revelation: 1. *Kashshāf*, 4/169; 2. *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, p. 331; 3. *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 7/159; 4. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 3/243; 5. *Tadhkirat Ibn al-Jawzī*, p. 322; 6. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, p. 201; 7. *Tafsīr Qurṭubī*, 19/129; 8. *Dhakhā'ir al-'Uqbā*, p. 102; 9. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 1/7; 10. *Tafsīr 'Allāma Nīshābūrī*, 29/5112.

3. Today's dining spreads have become elaborate and unfortunately sometimes lead to ingratitude, such that if some spreads contain only one or two types of food, those at the table begin to complain and show ingratitude, which is dangerous! However, the general condition of Muslims at that time was not good, as most people satisfied their hunger with just water and plain bread.

4. In early Islam, disbelievers who were captured in Islamic

battles were placed under Muslim control as slaves to help with personal tasks. Some Muslims, who were themselves unable to provide for their own needs, would free these captives. Since these prisoners had no one and nothing in Mecca and Medina, they were in need of help from others.

5. Qur'ān, 29:65

6. Narrations on this topic can be found in *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, Chapter 302, 1/346. Interested readers can refer to the above source.

7. *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 6/302

8. Islam does not prohibit the use of ornaments, but rather prevents extravagance and excess in it. The Holy Qur'ān not only does not prevent this, but orders the use of clean clothes and permissible ornaments when attending mosques, and the recommendation of wearing perfume when going to the mosque is for this reason.

9. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 8/113

10. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 8/157

11. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 29/158

12. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 29/165

13. *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 25/330

14. *Al-Kashshāf*, 4/169

15. *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, p. 331

16. *Al-Tadhkira*, p. 332

17. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, p. 201

18. *Dhakhā'ir al-'Uqbā*, p. 102

19. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 29/157

20. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 30/244

21. *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 19/19

22. *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 23/519

23. *Al-Kashshāf*, 1/262

24. The first and second possibilities and several other possibilities are mentioned in *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 2/219

25. Qur'ān, 3:92

26. As Fakhr Rāzī has chosen this view in his exegesis, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 30/244

27. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Letter 31.

28. *al-Kāfī*, 2/103 (Book of Faith and Disbelief, Chapter on Good Demeanor, hadith 2).

29. Some traditions state that when you face difficulties in life, make a deal with God! Give charity in that same state of hardship and complexity of life so that God may create an opening in your affairs. (*Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 6/259).

30. In a tradition, two things are counted as causes for one's entry into paradise: ethics and piety (*al-Kāfī*, Book of Faith and Disbelief, Chapter on Good Demeanor, hadith 5).

31. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 27/89.

32. For example, regarding the strike that Imam Ali (a.s.) delivered to 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd, the champion of the polytheists, in the Battle of Aḥzāb, killing him, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "The strike of Ali is better than the worship of both worlds (humans and jinn)." And in another statement he said: "Ali's strike against 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd is superior to the deeds of my entire community until the Day of Resurrection." (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, 39/2)

33. He has great affection for the household of infallibility and purity, and this affection is also seen among his followers to the extent that the Shāfi'īs are considered the closest Sunni school to us Shiites, unlike some other Sunni schools, namely the Wahhābīs, who do not get along with us at all but rather are in conflict and confrontation with all Muslim sects and accuse them all of innovation (*bid'a*) and polytheism (*shirk*).

34. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/158.

10

THEN ADAM RECEIVED CERTAIN WORDS FROM HIS LORD, AND HE TURNED TO HIM CLEMENTLY...

"Then Adam received certain words from his Lord, and He turned to him clementy. Indeed He is the All-clement, the All-merciful."
(*Sūrat al-Baqara*, verse 37)

Overview of the Discussion

This verse, which on one hand describes a part of the story of Adam (a.s.), on the other hand serves as important evidence for the legitimacy of intercession (*tawassul*), and on a third front speaks about repentance and returning to God, is considered one of the verses concerning the virtues of the five pure ones (a.s.).

In addition to these three topics, there are traditions in both general and specific sources regarding the connection between this verse and the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*) (a.s.), which we will address in the continuation of our discussion.

Explanation and Exegesis

Returning to God

"Then Adam received certain words from his Lord, and He turned to him clemently" - After the incident of Satan's temptation and the command for Adam to leave Paradise, Adam realized that he had wronged himself, and due to Satan's deception, he had been expelled from that peaceful and bountiful environment, and would be placed in the difficult and troublesome environment of Earth. At this point, Adam thought about compensating for his mistake and turned to his Lord with all his being - a turning filled with a mountain of regret, remorse and repentance! God's grace also rushed to his aid at this time, and as the Qur'an says in the above verse:

"Adam received certain words from his Lord, words that were effective and transformative, and with them he repented, and God accepted his repentance."

Regarding what these "words" (*kalimāt*) were, we will discuss this in detail in upcoming discussions.

"Indeed He is the All-clement, the All-merciful" - "Repentance" (*tawba*) originally means "returning," and in Qur'anic expressions it refers to returning from sin. This is when it is attributed to the sinner. However, sometimes this word is attributed to God, in which case it means returning to mercy; that is, He returns to His servant the mercy that had been withdrawn due to the commission of sin, after the servant returns to the path of obedience and servitude.

In any case, the above phrase (for God is All-clement and All-merciful) explains the reason for the acceptance of Adam's repentance.

Lessons from the Story of Adam and Eve!

The story of Adam and Eve, which appears in several chapters of the

Qur'an ,[1] contains important points and instructive lessons that are necessary and essential to consider:

1- God introduced Adam as His vicegerent (*khalīfat Allāh*), saying "Indeed I am going to set a viceroy on the earth" .[2] What qualities must God's vicegerent possess? Are all humans God's vicegerents? Or is this noble station befitting only some humans? These are matters that require careful attention, research and study.

2- The angels asked God, as a question rather than an objection: "Will You set in it someone who will cause corruption in it, and shed blood?" .[3] How did the angels know humanity's background? How had they studied our record?

3- God said to the angels: "Indeed I know what you do not know" ,[4] and then He taught Adam the "knowledge of names" (*'ilm al-asmā'*). He then questioned the angels about this knowledge of names, and they admitted their ignorance. At this point, God commanded Adam to inform the angels about the knowledge of names. When Adam did so, the angels acknowledged their mistake regarding him. What exactly is this knowledge of names? What was this knowledge of the secrets of creation and the naming of beings that elevated Adam's status so greatly?

4- God commanded all the angels to prostrate to Adam: "And when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate'" .[5] What an exalted status Adam must have had to become the object of prostration for all the angels of heaven! How great is the difference between a school of thought that accords such value to Adam, and schools that trace human origins back to monkeys, apes, or chimpanzees! The difference is as vast as that between earth and heaven!

5- After their creation, Adam and Eve dwelled in Paradise. Where was this Paradise? Was it a garden of this world? Or was it the Paradise of the hereafter? In that case, how were Adam and Eve expelled from there?

6- How did Adam fall for Satan's deception? In what way did Satan lead Adam to commit a preferential omission (*tark al-awlā*) (omitting an action that would have been better to perform)?

7- When Adam ate from the forbidden tree, all his garments fell away and he became naked, thus he was forced to use tree leaves to cover himself. What was this forbidden tree? And how were those garments made? What were they made of?

8- When Adam's garments fell away, he realized he had been deceived by Satan and became remorseful and regretful of his action.

9- To make amends for his error and mistake, he needed to repent to God, and for repentance it was necessary to seek intercession (*tawassul*) through someone who was close to the Divine presence. Who was this person?

10- Adam's repentance was accepted, but he was expelled from Paradise and settled on earth. Was his and his wife's dwelling in Paradise temporary from the beginning? Or was it meant to be eternal, but they were expelled due to their preferential omission?

The above ten points all deserve consideration and require extensive discussion, research, and investigation. However, here, in keeping with the verse under discussion, we will only examine the ninth point, which is the matter of Adam's intercession.

Adam's Intercession!

When Adam and Eve were settled in Paradise, God allowed them to partake of all the blessings present there, and only prohibited them from one tree. They continued their life in Paradise and did not go near the forbidden tree. Satan, who had suffered a terrible and devastating blow at the time of Adam's creation, and who had been expelled from God's presence and cursed by Him, was seeking an opportunity to take revenge on Adam! For this reason, he began to tempt Adam and Eve to lead them to violate the prohibition of the tree.

We know that Satan, when tempting humans, does not directly propose sin to them. Rather, he presents sin in a different guise and with a new and attractive appearance, such that sometimes a person commits sin thinking it is worship and the fulfillment of religious

duty! This is just as God says regarding the sun-worshippers, who were polytheists:

"I found her and her people prostrating to the sun instead of God, and Satan has made their deeds seem decorous to them—thus he has barred them from the way [of God], so they are not guided—"[6]

On this basis, Satan said to Adam in order to deceive him:

"Shall I guide you to the tree of immortality?"[7]

Humans are inherently inclined towards immortality and fearful of annihilation. Those who fear death do so because they consider death to be annihilation and destruction. However, the followers of Islam and the school of the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), who consider death merely a transition from one world to a greater world, never fear it.

In any case, Satan tempted Adam with this trick, suggesting that the forbidden tree would lead to immortality in Paradise. He became heedless of God's remembrance and command and ate from that tree! Then he realized that Satan had deceived him. Adam deeply regretted this action and intended to repent, but he did not know the way of repentance and seeking intercession (*tawassul*). God showed him the way of intercession, and words were inspired to him from God. He used these words in his intercession and repentance, and through this means his repentance was accepted, and he regained his previous station with the Beneficent, Ever-Accepting God. And with this repentance and return, he dealt another strong blow to Satan, humanity's ancient enemy.

What Were the "Words"?

Regarding what these words were, through which Adam sought intercession and repented to God, various views have been proposed. Here are three examples:

1- The words were those mentioned in verse 23 of *Sūrat al-A'rāf*, where God says:

"Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves! If You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers."

Adam and Eve repented to God with these words.[8]

2- According to Mujāhid, these words were the following phrases:

"O God, there is no deity but You. Glory be to You and praise be to You. My Lord, I have wronged myself, so forgive me, for You are the best of forgivers. O God, there is no deity but You. Glory be to You and praise be to You. My Lord, I have wronged myself, so have mercy on me, for You are the most merciful of the merciful. O God, there is no deity but You. Glory be to You and praise be to You. My Lord, I have wronged myself, so accept my repentance, for You are the Ever-Accepting, the Most Merciful."[9]

3- The words refer to Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn (a.s.); meaning that Adam (a.s.) sought intercession (*tawassul*) through the five pure ones (*khamsa ṭayyiba*) and made them his intercessors before God, and God accepted his repentance through the blessing of these noble personalities.[10]

There are numerous traditions in both Shi'i and Sunni sources that support the third possibility, although it is possible to reconcile all three possibilities as they are not mutually exclusive. This means that Adam sought intercession through the five pure ones, but the form and words of his repentance were as mentioned in the other two possibilities.

As mentioned before, a number of Sunni scholars have accepted the third possibility, which is agreed upon by Shi'i scholars, and have transmitted traditions in this regard. We will refer to eight of them:

1- ʿAllāma Bayhaqī in *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa*[11]

2- ʿAllāma Ibn ʿAsākir in *Musnad*[12]

3- ʿAllāma Suyūṭī in *Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr*[13]

4- ʿAllāma Suyūṭī in *Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ*[14]

5- ʿAllāma Kāshifī in *Maʿārij al-Nubuwwa*[15]

6- ʿAllāma Qundūzī in *Yanābīʿ al-Mawadda*[16]

7- ʿAllāma Ibn al-Maghāzilī in *Manāqib*[17]

8- ʿAllāma Naṭanzī in *Khaṣā'iṣ al-ʿAlawiyya*[18]

Consider some examples of these traditions:

A- Ibn al-Maghāzilī narrates from Ibn ʿAbbās:

"The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) was asked about the words that

Adam received. He said: Adam asked Him by the right of Muhammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, to turn to him in forgiveness, and He turned to him."[19]

B- Ibn ʿAsākir narrates in *Musnad* from the second caliph:

"Adam said: I ask You by the right of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad and his progeny to forgive me - until he (a.s.) said - and if it were not for him, I would not have created you."[20]

Although ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb did not attribute this tradition to the Prophet, such matters could not have been known except through the Prophet (s.a.w.) or an infallible Imam (a.s.). Therefore, he must have heard it from the Prophet of Islam.

C- ʿAllāma Naṭanzī narrates the following tradition in *Khaṣā'iṣ al-'Alawiyya* from Mujāhid:

"The words that Adam received from his Lord were: 'O God, by the right of Muhammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, turn to me in forgiveness,' and God turned to him."[21]

The continuation of this tradition states that when Adam's repentance was accepted, he prepared a ring for himself on which was engraved the name of the Prophet of Islam as the Messenger of God, and the name of ʿAlī as the Commander of the Faithful (*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*).

In summary, according to numerous traditions found in both Shi'i and Sunni books (and what was mentioned was just a sample of those many traditions), the words through which Adam sought intercession and by which his repentance was accepted were the "Five Pure Ones" (*Khamsa Ṭayyiba*). Has this station in existence been established for anyone other than the People of the House of Infallibility (a.s.)? Does this great virtue not indicate that this family are the most excellent of human beings? If they are the most excellent (which they are) and God wishes to appoint a successor for His Prophet, would divine wisdom allow others to be appointed as the successor of the Messenger of God when the most excellent individuals are present? And if people wish to make a selection, would reason permit choosing and selecting others when the most excellent individuals are present?

The judgment is yours.

Unfortunately, Mecca and Medina, and the sacred sites of these two pilgrimage cities of the world's Muslims, have fallen into the hands of the Wahhabis (*Wahhābī*), who hold rigid and harsh beliefs. They strongly oppose the practice of seeking intercession (*tawassul*) and strictly forbid Muslims from visiting the illuminated grave of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and seeking his benevolent intercession, as well as visiting the pure and illuminated graves of the Imams of Baqi' (a.s.) and other notable figures buried in Baqi', and seeking their intercession. What right do they have to impose their beliefs on other Muslims, even many Sunnis? If they have such a right, why don't they force everyone to pray with their arms folded? These are questions that every Muslim who visits Mecca and Medina asks themselves and finds no answer! Yes, the Wahhabis strongly oppose intercession and consider it contradictory to Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), and a form of polytheism (*shirk*)!

Now that we have reached the topic of intercession, it is necessary to have a comprehensive and complete discussion about its legitimacy in light of the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Infallibles (a.s.).

Types of Intercession (*Tawassul*)

Intercession has various types:

1- Sometimes in intercession, we address the Prophet or an Imam, as in the Supplication of Intercession (*Du'ā' al-Tawassul*), where we address each of the Infallibles individually and ask them to intercede for us before God with their special status. In this type of intercession, we are actually asking God for our needs while making these noble figures our intermediaries.

2- Sometimes we address God directly, but we call upon Him by the right of someone who holds a special position of respect before Him, asking Him to fulfill our needs. This is like the intercession of Adam before God:

"O God, O Praiseworthy, by the right of Muhammad; O Exalted,

by the right of Ali; O Creator, by the right of Fatima; O Beneficent, by the right of Hasan; O Eternally Beneficent, by the right of Husayn."

In this type of intercession too, the need is requested from God while a noble figure serves as an intermediary.

3- In the third type, we again address God, but we adjure Him by the right of someone who has special status before Him to fulfill our needs and solve our problems. For example, when it is said: "O Lord! We adjure You by the Prophet of Islam, or the Qur'an, or other sacred entities to fulfill our needs!"

The Wahhabis consider all types and forms of intercession to be forbidden and view it as a form of polytheism! Consider the words of some Wahhabi leaders:

1- Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb says in his book on Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), which would be more aptly titled polytheism (*shirk*):

"This is indeed major polytheism"[22]

2- Al-Ṣanʿānī, another Wahhabi scholar, says:

"Whoever seeks intercession through a created being has associated partners with God and has adopted a belief that is not permissible to hold."[23]

3- Ibn Taymiyya, the principal founder of Wahhabi thought, says in this regard:

"Whoever seeks intercession through someone of high status before God... this is among the actions of disbelievers and polytheists."[24]

In summary, the adherents of Wahhabism consider all forms of intercession to be polytheism, and these deviants from true Islam create numerous difficulties for pilgrims to the House of God in Mecca and Medina using the two weapons of "polytheism" (*shirk*) and "innovation" (*bidʿa*).

Explanation of Divine Unity and Its Exalted Status

To clarify that intercession has no contradiction with Divine Unity, we must first explain Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) and recognize its exalted status. We believe that Divine Unity is the fundamental basis of reli-

gion and plays an essential role in everything; God is One, the call of all prophets has been toward one thing, on the Day of Resurrection all humans will be resurrected on one day, the Ka'ba and direction of prayer for all Muslims is one point, the Qur'an of all Muslims is one; in short, Divine Unity is the fundamental principle that flows through all the principles and branches of our religion. Therefore, Divine Unity is not just one principle among the principles of religion, but rather flows through all religious principles and branches. Divine Unity is like the thread of a rosary that connects all the beads together, such that without Divine Unity, religion cannot be realized.

Just as without the thread, a rosary cannot take form. Given this explanation of Divine Unity and its exalted status, anything that contradicts Divine Unity is rejected from our perspective.

Types of Divine Unity

Divine Unity has various branches; we will point to four of them - which are the most important types of Divine Unity.

1- Unity of Essence (*tawḥīd al-dhāt*): This means that God's essence is unique; not that God is one and not two. This is because in the first interpretation, no likeness, similitude, or equivalent is conceivable for God, while in the second interpretation, a likeness, similitude, or equivalent for God is conceivable, even though it may not exist externally. For this reason, the first verse of *Sūrat al-Tawḥīd* ("Say, 'He is God, the One'") is explained by: "nor has He any equal" - meaning He has no likeness or equivalent, nor can any be conceived.

2- Unity of Attributes (*tawḥīd al-ṣifāt*): All of God's attributes return to one reality. In God's case, the attribute of knowledge is not separate from His power, and the attribute of power is not separate from His courage, and the attribute of eternality is not separate from knowledge, power, and courage. However, regarding humans, it might be said that their knowledge is in their spirit, their courage and power in their arms, and their love and compassion in their heart. But this is not the case with God; rather, His entire essence is knowledge, His entire essence is power, His entire essence is life, and so on.

3- Unity of Actions (*tawḥīd al-af'āl*): Every action, movement, and phenomenon that occurs in the world is from God, and nothing has any effect without God's permission and will; "There is no effecter in existence except God" (*lā mu'aththira fī l-wujūd illā Allāh*). If fire burns, it is by God's command; for this reason, the fire into which Abraham was thrown did not burn him, because such permission had not been granted to it by God. And if water extinguishes fire, that too has its effect through God's permission and will. Therefore, whatever we do is by God's command, for God has given us free will to choose; our power, intellect, choice, and free will all come from God, and all our movements return to His pure essence.

In summary, God is the independent effecter (*mu'aththir*), and all other causes, whatever effect they may have, operate through divine will.

4- Unity of Worship (*tawḥīd al-'ibāda*): Worship and devotion are exclusively for God, and no being other than God deserves to be worshipped. When some Shi'i Muslims kiss the threshold of the shrine when visiting one of the pure Imams (a.s.), they are in fact performing a prostration of gratitude to God for granting them such a blessing, not - God forbid - prostrating before the Imam. This is because Shi'i Muslims do not consider any being other than God worthy of worship and do not place their foreheads on any threshold except God's. To prevent any misconception or pretext that some might exploit, we advise Shi'i Muslims not to perform even the prostration of gratitude in such situations, so that there remains no suspicion of worshipping other than God. In any case, worship is exclusively for the One God.

The four branches above are the main divisions of Divine Unity, although there are other branches such as unity of sovereignty ,[25] unity of legislative authority ,[26] unity of ownership ,[27] and others .[28]

What has been stated above is the reality of Divine Unity. If a Muslim holds such beliefs, their understanding of Divine Unity is complete. The Wahhabis, who constantly speak of Divine Unity and polytheism, do not understand these classifications that have come to

them through the teachings of the Shi'i Imams (a.s.); for this reason, they continually accuse others of polytheism.

The Ash'aris and Their Incorrect Explanation of Divine Unity in Acts!

The Ash'aris, who are one of the Sunni schools of thought, were unable to resolve the issue of Divine Unity in acts (*tawḥīd al-af'āl*) and provide a correct explanation of it. As a result, they came to believe in determinism and portrayed humans as beings without will or choice! They imagined that if humans had free will in their actions, this would lead to polytheism in the branch of Divine Unity in acts. However, their belief in determinism (*jabr*) undermines the entire system of prophethood, resurrection, worship, and Imamate!

Indeed, if humans lack will and are compelled in their actions and deeds, what meaning is there to questioning and answering on the Day of Resurrection?

What justification is there for punishing sinners and rewarding God's good servants? For neither did the sinner have choice in their sin, nor did the obedient one worship with their own will. Therefore, neither does one deserve reward nor does the other deserve punishment! If we accept determinism, no court should try any criminal, since they had no choice in committing the crime.

Can you put fire on trial for burning an innocent person?

Can you put ocean water on trial for drowning an innocent person?

Can you put electricity on trial for killing an innocent person?

Certainly, the answer to all these questions is negative, and such trials would be laughable. A human who is compelled and lacks will is like water, fire, and electricity, and their crimes cannot be tried.

Interestingly, the supporters of this theory act contrary to their own belief in practice. If someone slaps them, they protest; if a thief breaks into their house, they file a complaint against them. Yet if humans lack will, one should neither protest against anyone nor complain about anyone. This represents an important contradiction

between the words and actions of those who believe in the doctrine of determinism.

Dear readers may think that these ideas are merely theoretical and have no real supporters. Unfortunately, we must declare that some people seriously defend this false theory, have written various books in its defense, and such people do exist.

Yes, these individuals, because they were unable to properly explain Divine Unity in acts (*tawḥīd al-afʿāl*), turned to determinism and forgot that God has given humans free will and volition. If we say that humans have free will and volition and perform actions based on these, all of this ultimately returns to God and does not harm Divine Unity in acts in any way.

The Ash'aris and believers in determinism have even denied the world of causes (*ʿālam al-asbāb*). They say:

"Fire does not burn, rather it is God who burns!" They also believe that: "A stone does not break glass; rather, when the stone approaches the glass, it is God who breaks the glass." Yes, they have denied these clear and self-evident matters due to their incorrect explanation of Divine Unity in acts.

Therefore, Divine Unity in acts does not conflict with human free will and volition, nor with the world of causes, because will and causality are all God's work. God has given humans power, strength, intellect, free will, volition, and choice, and since all of these come from Him, then God performs all actions; although humans are responsible for what they choose.

To clarify this matter further, consider this example: A father gives money to his child to spend on living expenses; but the father is present, and can take back the money at any moment. Here, the money belongs to the father; although the child is responsible for the purchases and expenditures they make.

The conclusion is that Divine Unity in acts does not conflict with human free will and volition, and it should not be presented in an extreme and polytheistic manner.

Is Seeking Intercession Compatible with Divine Unity?

Question: Why do the Wahhabis consider seeking intercession (*tawassul*) a form of polytheism? With which branch of Divine Unity is it supposedly incompatible? Does seeking intercession conflict with Divine Unity in essence? Does it conflict with Divine Unity in attributes? Without doubt, seeking intercession has no incompatibility with Divine Unity in essence or attributes.

Does seeking intercession create any problem with Divine Unity in worship? If the answer is yes, I must say that the Wahhabis have made a grave error, because when Shi'is seek intercession through the Prophet (s.a.w.) or the infallible Imams (a.s.) or the Qur'an and the like, they never worship them as the idol-worshippers did when they took their idols as intercessors and intermediaries. Rather, we ask these great personalities to use their standing and honor in the divine presence and request God to solve our problems. Therefore, the difference between our seeking intercession and the practice of idol-worshippers is very clear, and anyone who compares Shi'i intercession to the practice of idol-worshippers is truly being unfair!

Moreover, seeking intercession through wood and stone that can neither benefit nor harm cannot be compared to seeking intercession through an Imam, Prophet, or the Qur'an, which are valuable and have great proximity to God. The conclusion is that seeking intercession has no conflict with Divine Unity in essence, Divine Unity in attributes, or Divine Unity in worship. So when the Wahhabis consider it to conflict with Divine Unity, what do they mean? With which branch of Divine Unity do they see it as incompatible?

Answer: It seems that when the Wahhabis consider seeking intercession (*tawassul*) to be polytheism, they mean that it conflicts with Divine Unity in actions. This is because when someone seeks intercession through the Prophet or an Imam and asks them to accomplish something or solve a problem, they are attributing effectiveness to someone other than God. We know that effectiveness belongs only to God, and if someone believes that there is any effective agent in existence other than God, such a person is considered a polytheist.

However, in response to this, we say: The Shi'is do not consider the Prophet, Imam, Qur'an, or anything else through which they seek intercession to be sources of effectiveness in the universe parallel to God. Rather, they consider them effective in a hierarchical relationship to creation and with God's permission and authorization, which has no conflict with Divine Unity in actions. Yes, if we were to say that the Prophet and Imam – God forbid – were independently effective, that would be polytheism. But no one claims such a thing. When we say that the Prophet (s.a.w.) intercedes for us with God so that God may do something for us and solve one of our problems, this is not polytheism; rather, it is the essence of Divine Unity.

This point is also reflected in the Qur'an. Surely the Wahhabis accept the Qur'an! Verse 49 of *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān* provides a decisive response to their baseless claims and accusations. Consider this brief explanation and exegesis of this verse:

"I have certainly brought you a sign from your Lord"

"I will create for you out of clay the form of a bird, then I will breathe into it, and it will become a bird by God's leave."

"And I heal the blind and the leper and I revive the dead by God's leave."

"And I will tell you what you have eaten and what you have stored in your houses."

This verse provides a decisive and crushing response to those who reject ontological authority (*wilāyat takwīnī*) or deny seeking intercession (*tawassul*) and consider it to conflict with Divine Unity in actions.

Therefore, if we attribute actions to other than God and believe that they can be effective by God's permission, such a matter has no conflict with Divine Unity.

Seeking Intercession in the Qur'an

In addition to what has been discussed, there are verses in the Qur'an that explicitly address the matter of seeking intercession (*tawassul*). Consider these examples: 1- In verse 97 of *Sūrat Yūsuf* we read:

"They said, 'Father! Plead [with God] for forgiveness of our sins! We have indeed been erring.'"

When the news of Joseph's (a.s.) well-being reached his father and brothers, they realized their mistakes and errors and sought to make amends through repentance and seeking forgiveness. They came to their father to make him an intermediary between themselves and God. They sought intercession (*tawassul*) through their father so that he would ask God to forgive their sins. The father replied to his children:

"I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you; indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful."[29]

According to this verse, the errant children of Jacob (a.s.) sought intercession through this noble prophet and asked him to seek forgiveness for them at the divine threshold. Therefore, what objection could there be if we also seek intercession through the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), the infallible Imams (a.s.), the Qur'an, or other sacred things, and ask them to beseech God to solve our problems?!

2- In verse 64 of *Sūrat al-Nisā'* we read:

"We did not send any messenger but to be obeyed by God's leave. Had they, when they wronged themselves, come to you and pleaded to God for forgiveness, and the Messenger had pleaded for forgiveness for them, they would have surely found God all-clement, all-merciful."

In this verse, God Himself teaches people the way of intercession (*tawassul*).

What answer do the Wahhabis have to these two verses of the Qur'an, which explicitly permit intercession?

Intercession Through Great Figures After Their Death

Those who have no convincing answer to these arguments and Qur'anic verses have been forced to retreat somewhat from their position and consider intercession through the Prophet (s.a.w.) permissible during his lifetime, but they believe that intercession through him after his death is not permissible!

They have not considered the implications of this statement, because according to their belief, this would mean that polytheism (*shirk*) is permissible during the Prophet's lifetime but not after his passing! In other words, the implication of their statement is that polytheism is of two types: 1. Permissible and allowed polytheism! 2. Impermissible and forbidden polytheism!

Has any scholar ever made such a statement?

Has any Muslim ever heard that there is such a thing as permissible polytheism (*shirk*)?

The invalidity and impermissibility of polytheism is a universal intellectual principle that has no exceptions. The Wahhabis are intellectually backward as a group and cannot be compared to other Islamic schools of thought. They cannot be compared to the scholars of Damascus, nor are they on the level of the scholars of al-Azhar, nor can they be measured against the Shi'i scholars in the religious seminaries.

Furthermore, what has diminished from the Prophet (s.a.w.) after his passing? Although his physical body may have perished, undoubtedly the soul becomes stronger and more expansive after separating from the body! The Qur'an affirms an intermediate life (*barzakhī*) for martyrs. In verse 169 of *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān* we read:

"Do not suppose those who were slain in the way of God to be dead; rather they are living and provided for near their Lord."

When martyrs are alive after death and receive sustenance near God, and according to the next verse are watching over their friends in this world, does not the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), who has a station far above that of martyrs, have an intermediate life after death? Without doubt, he has an intermediate life at a level higher than the martyrs. This is why Muslims send greetings to him at the end of every prayer:

"Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and God's mercy and blessings."

If he is not alive, to whom is this greeting addressed? And what is its meaning?

The conclusion is that seeking intercession (*tawassul*) through

religious leaders, whether in life or death, is permissible, and there is no difference between their death and life in this regard.

Intercession in Narrations

Intercession (*tawassul*) has been extensively discussed in both Shi'i and Sunni narrations. Here we will refer to some of these narrations that appear in general sources:

1.Bayhaqī, one of the Sunni scholars, narrates from Anas - the special servant of the Prophet (s.a.w.) - as follows:

"During the lifetime of the Prophet (s.a.w.), a Bedouin came to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and presented his need through these verses:

'We have come to you while the virgin's breast bleeds, And the mother has become distracted from her child.

We have no refuge except to you, And where can creation flee except to the messengers?'

O Prophet of God! We have come from the desert while drought has made us desperate.

Due to the severity of the drought, blood flows instead of milk in the breasts of nursing women. There is neither milk in women's breasts nor water in the crops. We have taken refuge with you, and we have no refuge except the Prophet of God.

When the Prophet (s.a.w.) heard this Arab man's heartbreaking plea, he was deeply moved and headed toward the mosque. From the intensity of his emotion and distress, his cloak was dragging on the ground; he ascended the pulpit and raised his hands in supplication; he prayed until the rain of mercy began to fall, and thus the people were saved from drought and water scarcity."[30]

According to this narration, the Arab man sought intercession (*tawassul*) through the Prophet (s.a.w.) during his lifetime, and the Prophet (s.a.w.) did not prohibit him from doing so.

1.Bukhārī narrates in his book:

During the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.), people were afflicted with drought. To resolve this problem, they sought intercession (*tawassul*)

through the Prophet (s.a.w.). The Prophet (s.a.w.) prayed, and the rain of mercy descended. When the rain came, the Prophet said:

"If Abū Ṭālib were alive, his eyes would have been comforted."[31]

This statement of the Prophet (s.a.w.) refers to a prayer for rain that was performed by Abū Ṭālib before the Prophet's mission, which resulted in the descent of merciful rain upon the people. At that time, Abū Ṭālib took the Prophet's swaddling clothes in his hands, made him an intermediary, and beseeched God by the Prophet's swaddling clothes to send rain upon the people. His prayer was answered, and the people were saved from drought. Then Abū Ṭālib composed a poem about this, the first verse of which is as follows:

"And the fair-faced one through whose countenance rain is sought from the clouds, a refuge for orphans and protector of widows."[32]

In summary, according to this narration, people sought intercession (*tawassul*) through him both before and after his prophetic mission, and they achieved results. Not only did the Prophet (s.a.w.) not prohibit them from this practice, but he spoke well of it, and even asked others to recite the remaining verses of Abū Ṭālib's poem that was composed about the rain incident, and Ali (a.s.) undertook this task.

1.Samhūdī, one of the prominent Sunni scholars, in his book *Wafā' al-Wafā'* narrates the following story about Mālik, one of the four Imams of the Sunnis, and Manṣūr Dawānīqī, the Abbasid caliph:

Manṣūr came to the Prophet's Mosque with his servants and guards to visit the grave of the Prophet (s.a.w.). Mālik was also there engaged in visitation. Manṣūr was constantly giving orders to his companions in a loud voice. This caused Mālik to object; he addressed Manṣūr saying: "Why are you making so much noise? Don't you know where you are? Haven't you read this noble verse:

'O you who have faith! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak aloud to him as you shout to one another, lest your works should fail without your being aware.'"[33]

Manṣūr said: "The Prophet is not alive, this verse pertains to the time when he was living!"

Mālik replied: "His sanctity in death is like his sanctity in life." [34]

According to this statement, respect for the Prophet is necessary both in life and death, and seeking intercession (*tawassul*) through him is permissible in all circumstances.

1.Ibn Ḥajar, a well-known Sunni scholar who was highly partisan, makes some interesting admissions in favor of Shi'ism in his book *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqa*. Among these admissions is a poem he quotes from Imam Shāfi'ī. Consider this poem:

"The Family of the Prophet is my means of access, and they are my intermediary to him."

"Through them I hope to receive my record tomorrow in my right hand." [35]

The Family of the Prophet are my intermediaries before God and my means of seeking intercession (*tawassul*) to solve problems. I hope that through seeking intercession through these noble ones, on the Day of Resurrection my record of deeds will be given to me in my right hand.

The conclusion is that seeking intercession through religious leaders and sacred objects like the Qur'an does not conflict with Divine Unity in actions (*tawḥīd af'ālī*), and it has been clearly presented in the verses of the Qur'an and traditions, and Muslims have been encouraged and urged toward it.

Worship of Other Than God is Not Permissible

Question: You said that worship and devotion are exclusive to God and no object of worship except God deserves to be worshipped, and that worshipping other than God is considered polytheism (*shirk*), while in some verses of the Qur'an prostration to other than God is mentioned! Consider these verses: 1- In the story of the creation of Adam and Eve, it is mentioned that after creating Adam, God commanded all the angels to prostrate to Adam and they all prostrated:

"Thereat the angels prostrated, all of them together,"[36]

All the angels prostrated without exception.

If worshipping other than God is considered polytheism (*shirk*), why in this verse was there a command to prostrate to Adam?

2- When Joseph's brothers found Joseph (a.s.) and gave the news of his being alive to his parents, they all traveled to Egypt. The Qur'an describes the moment when Joseph's brothers and his parents came before Joseph as follows:

"And he seated his parents high upon the throne, and they fell down prostrate before him."[37]

According to this verse, Jacob's children prostrated before him. If prostrating to other than God is polytheism (*shirk*), how is this verse to be explained?

3- When the Children of Israel conquered Jerusalem and entered the city, upon entering the Temple of Jerusalem, they prostrated before this mosque. God says the following about this in verse 58 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*:

"And when We said, 'Enter this town, and eat thereof freely whencesoever you wish, and enter prostrating at the gate, and say,"Relieve [us of the burden of our sins]," that We may forgive your iniquities, and soon We will enhance the virtuous.'"

In summary, in these three verses, prostration to other than God is mentioned. How are these verses compatible with Divine Unity in worship (*tawḥīd ʿibādī*)?

Answer: As we said, the prohibition of polytheism (*shirk*), the impermissibility of prostrating to other than God, and the exclusivity of worship and devotion to God, is a universal law that admits no exceptions.

Polytheism (*shirk*) is not conceivable or valid in any branch of Divine Unity; therefore, the prostration in the above verses does not mean worship or devotion, but rather prostration of gratitude or prostration of reverence and honoring God's blessings.

When the angels prostrated to Adam, they were in reality prostrating to God who had created such a valuable being, so the prostration was actually for God, but on account of Adam's creation.

The brothers of Joseph also gave thanks to God for the greatness He had bestowed upon their brother Joseph, and fell into prostration to honor this greatness. They prostrated in gratitude for being saved from their difficult life in Canaan, finding their brother after many years, migrating from Canaan to Egypt, and attaining an honorable life. Similarly, the Children of Israel also prostrated for God, not for the Temple of Jerusalem.

When Muslims and pilgrims to the House of God form a circle around the Ka'ba during congregational prayer and perform a circular congregational prayer, all prostrating before the Ka'ba, are they worshipping the Ka'ba, or does no one worship that house, but rather all fall into prostration before the Ka'ba to worship God?

Therefore, prostration everywhere is for God and in reality for worshipping the Lord of the worlds, even though its motivations may differ. Consequently, the above three verses are not considered exceptions to the general rule of Divine Unity in worship.

1. The story of Adam and Eve is detailed in Qur'ān, 2:30 onwards, Qur'ān, 7:11 onwards, and Qur'ān, 20:115 onwards.

2. Qur'ān, 2:30

3. Qur'ān, 2:30

4. Qur'ān, 2:31

5. Qur'ān, 7:11

6. Qur'ān, 27:24

7. Qur'ān, 20:120

8. The late Ṭabarsī has narrated this view from scholars such as "Ḥasan", "Qatāda", "'Ikrima" and "Sa'īd ibn Jubayr" (*Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/89)

9. *Al-Tibyān*, 1/169

10. *Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/89

11. Quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/76

12. Quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/77

13. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 1/60 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/78)

14. Quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/78

15. *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, pillar 2, p. 9 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/78)

16. *Yanābī' al-Mawadda*, p. 97 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/79)

17. Quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/77

18. Quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/78

19. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/76

20. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/77

21. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/78

22. Quoted from *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, p. 301

23. *Taṭhīr al-I'tiqād* (quoted from *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, p. 301)

24. *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, 302.

25. The meaning of "unity of sovereignty" (*tawḥīd ḥākimiyyat*) is that the legitimacy of all governments must come from God, not from the people. If people participate in elections and involvement, and this is valued, that too is by God's command.

26. "Unity of legislation" (*tawḥīd shāri'iyyat*) means that only God is the legislator and any law that is derived from divine laws has legitimacy.

27. The meaning of "unity of ownership" (*tawḥīd mālikiyyat*) is that in reality, God is the true owner and this is merely entrusted to us for a few days. Everything we have is from Him, placed in our custody temporarily as a trust.

28. For more detailed discussions about different branches of monotheism (*tawḥīd*), please refer to *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 4.

29. Qur'ān, 12:98. The reason why Prophet Jacob (a.s.) did not grant their request immediately was that everything has its proper time, and prayers are answered more quickly at certain times. Therefore, Jacob (a.s.) postponed the seeking of forgiveness. According to some traditions, he wanted to do this on Thursday night - which is a very suitable time for prayers to be answered. Interestingly, in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 6/3491, it is mentioned that Jacob (a.s.) intended to seek forgiveness for them on a Thursday night that coincided with the night of Ashura! (*Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 10/75).

30. *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, 310; for detailed discussions about the rain

prayer, please refer to our book "An Investigation into the Rain Prayer."

31. *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, 310.

32. *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, 311.

33. Qurʾān, 49:2.

34. *Wafāʾ al-Wafāʾ*, 1/422 (as quoted in *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, 317).

35. *Al-Ṣawāʿiq al-Muḥriqa* (as quoted in *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, 319).

36. Qurʾān, 15:30 and 38:73.

37. Qurʾān, 12:100

PART III

VERSES ON THE SPECIAL VIRTUES OF ALI (A.S.)

11

AND AMONG THE PEOPLE IS HE WHO SELLS HIS SOUL SEEKING THE PLEASURE OF GOD...

"And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of God, and God is most kind to [His] servants."

(*Sūrat al-Baqara*, verse 207)

Overview of the Discussion

This verse, which has become known as the Verse of the Night of Sleep (*Laylat al-Mabīt*), is one of the most important verses concerning the special virtues of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.). It describes a virtue that has not been established for anyone else in Islam. The above verse refers to the unparalleled sacrifice of the first Imam of the Shi'is, who slept in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) bed on the historic night of his migration to Medina. As will be explained, this verse is among those pertaining to his leadership (*wilāya*).

The Context of Revelation

Many scholars and learned individuals, from both Shi'i and Sunni traditions, believe that this verse pertains to Ali (a.s.). They have

extensively documented this in their books, to the extent that this account has reached the level of successive transmission (*tawātur*); meaning it has been reported so frequently that there remains no room for its denial.

The summary of the Night of Sleep (*Laylat al-Mabīt*) is as follows:

When the enemies of Islam and the stubborn polytheists of Mecca felt threatened by the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), and their other plots and conspiracies proved ineffective, they made their final decision and devised three extremely dangerous plans to confront the last Prophet of God. They said:

"We must either kill the Prophet of Islam, or imprison him for life so that he has no contact with anyone, or exile him beyond the borders of the Hijaz![1]"

Evidence and indications show that ultimately the first option, which was the most dangerous of the three, was chosen. To execute this dangerous plot, they sought help from forty Arab tribes. From each tribe, a skilled and heroic swordsman came forward. At night, forty swordsmen ready for battle surrounded the house of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and watched his bed from above the walls or through the doorway openings, waiting for the right moment to enter the house and kill him!

God informed His Prophet of the polytheists' plot through the messenger of revelation. The Prophet decided to leave Mecca. For the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) to survive this dangerous plot and diabolical scheme, he needed to accomplish two tasks:

First, he had to move in the opposite direction of Medina. Instead of heading north from Mecca toward Medina, he moved south of Mecca, so that if any enemies noticed his departure from Mecca, they would not be able to find and capture him.

Second, someone needed to sleep in the Prophet of Islam's bed, so the enemy would not notice the Prophet's absence and departure from Mecca.

For this purpose, he said to Ali (a.s.): "Tonight you must sleep in my bed." Ali (a.s.) asked: "If I sleep in your bed, will you be saved from the enemies of Islam and reach Medina safely?[2]" The Prophet

replied: "Yes." Ali (a.s.), in gratitude for the safety of God's vicegerent on earth, prostrated in thanksgiving. It is said that this was the first prostration of gratitude (*sujūd al-shukr*) in the sacred law of Islam.

After placing Ali (a.s.) in his place, the Prophet (s.a.w.), with God's grace and favor, left Mecca and moved southward, contrary to the direction of Medina. He took refuge in the cave of Thawr, and after the enemy despaired of finding him, he moved toward Medina and arrived there safely.[3]

Without doubt, the Night of Sleep (*Laylat al-Mabīt*) was a very sensitive, dangerous, and decisive night for Islam, and the hero of this perilous night was none other than the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.).

When the Prophet was moving toward Medina, God revealed the verse under discussion between Mecca and Medina regarding the unique sacrifice and selflessness of Ali (a.s.) toward the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

Acknowledgments of Sunni Scholars!

The occasion of revelation that was briefly mentioned is not exclusive to Shi'i scholars; rather, many Sunni scholars have also narrated it.

Among them are Ṭabarī ,[4] Ibn Hishām ,[5] Ḥalabī ,[6] and Ya'qūbī[7] (who are all famous Sunni historians), and Aḥmad[8] from among Sunni jurists, Ibn al-Jawzī ,[9] and Ibn Ṣabbāgh al-Mālikī .[10]

Most noteworthy of all is what Abū Ja'far al-Iskāfī, the teacher of the famous commentator of *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd al-Mu'tazilī, has said in this regard. He says:

"The hadith of the bed has been established through multiple chains of transmission (*tawātur*)... and none deny it except a madman or someone who has no association with the people of faith... All exegetes have narrated that the word of God: 'And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of God' was revealed concerning Ali (a.s.) on the Night of Sleep on the bed."[11]

The conclusion is that all Islamic scholars, both Shi'i and Sunni,

unanimously agree that the verse of the Night of Sleep was revealed concerning the unique sacrifice and selflessness of Ali (a.s.).

Commentary and Exegesis

An Unparalleled Transaction!

"And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of God" - Some people sacrifice their lives and offer them for sale to attain the pleasure and satisfaction of God (which is a most lofty and important station), and that person, as mentioned before, was Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.). The commodity being traded in this unparalleled transaction was Ali's life, the buyer was God, the Creator of all worlds, the seller was Ali (a.s.), and the price of this commodity was the pleasure and satisfaction of the Lord of the worlds.

"And God is most kind to [His] servants" (*'ibād*) - God is most kind and merciful to His servants.

Can there be any kindness and mercy greater than this - that God, the Owner of all existence including human beings, would purchase a human life at the highest price?!

Transaction with God

There are three verses in the Qur'an concerning transactions with God, and comparing these three verses with each other is not without benefit.

First Verse

In verse 111 of *Sūrat al-Tawba*, we read:

"Indeed God has bought from the faithful their souls and their possessions for paradise to be theirs: they fight in the way of God, kill, and are killed. A promise binding upon Him in the Torah and the Evangel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his promise than God?

So rejoice in the bargain you have made with Him, and that is the great success."

In this great transaction, the buyer is God, the sellers are the faithful and striving servants (*mujāhid*), the commodity being traded is the lives of the faithful, and the price of the transaction is the highest paradise. The document of this fascinating and valuable transaction has been recorded in three authoritative divine books (the Qur'an, the Evangel, and the Torah).

This transaction is so blessed that God refers to it as "the great success" and congratulates the sellers! And truly such a transaction is great, for the buyer is purchasing at the highest price something that already belongs to Him!

Does such a transaction not deserve to be called "the great success" and warrant congratulations?!

Second Verse

God refers to another transaction He has made with His servants in verses 10-13 of *Sūrat al-Ṣaff*. In these four verses we read:

In this profitable transaction too, the sellers are the faithful, and the buyer is the merciful God, and the commodity being traded is the lives of the faithful people, and the price and value of the transaction is the forgiveness of sins, entry into paradise, pure dwellings in paradise, imminent victory and divine assistance (the conquest of Mecca). God has also referred to this great transaction as a tremendous success and has congratulated the fortunate buyers on it.

Third Verse

The third verse is verse 207 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, which was explained earlier. And as we mentioned, in this transaction too, the buyer is God and the seller is Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), and the commodity being traded is Ali's (a.s.) life, and the price and value of the transaction is the pleasure and satisfaction of God.

Comparing These Three Transactions

The three transactions mentioned in the verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba*, *Sūrat al-Ṣaff*, and *Sūrat al-Baqara*, which were explained earlier, are similar in some aspects. For instance, in all three transactions, the buyer is God, the sellers are the faithful, and the commodity being traded is the lives of the faithful. However, the price and value of the offered commodity differs. In one transaction, God purchases the lives of the faithful in exchange for paradise. In another transaction, He raises the price and adds, in addition to the highest paradise, heavenly dwellings, forgiveness of sins, and worldly victories. But in the third transaction, which appears in the verse under discussion (the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt*), the highest price and most valuable compensation, which is God's pleasure, is presented. It is clear that God's satisfaction and pleasure cannot be compared with paradise and the like. Interestingly, this "price and value" is more compatible with Ali's (a.s.) character. This is why we read in his precious words, addressing God:

"My God! Your hellfire is truly painful, but I did not worship You out of fear of fire. Just as paradise and its blessings are truly attractive and valuable, I did not worship You out of desire for it. Rather, I found You worthy of worship and servitude, so I worshipped You solely out of love for You!"[12]

Another Comparison!

Ali (a.s.), despite the great danger threatening his life during *Laylat al-Mabīt*, willingly agreed to rest in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) bed without showing any fear or hesitation. When the enemy attacked the Prophet's (s.a.w.) house in the morning and found Ali in his bed, their plot was foiled. They directed an insulting remark at "young Ali," to which he responded with beautiful words in defense of himself, his faith, and his Prophet. These words demonstrated his bravery, intellect, and extraordinary strength. The details of this conversation will be discussed in future sections, God willing. However, Abu Bakr, who

had left the center of danger with the Prophet (s.a.w.) and taken refuge in the Cave of Thawr, lost his composure and was overcome with fear when he heard the footsteps of Islam's enemies who had left Mecca in pursuit of the Prophet (s.a.w.). His fear was so evident that one could easily discern the depth of his terror by looking at his face! Therefore, the Prophet (s.a.w.) had to console him to reduce his terror somewhat. You yourself can read the detailed account from this summary!

The Subtlety of Expression in the Verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt*

In the verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba* and *Sūrat al-Ṣaff*, the expressions "Indeed God has bought" and "Shall I show you a deal" are used, meaning that God, who is the buyer in these transactions, encourages the sellers to sell their goods. However, in the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt*, the expression "And among the people is he who sells his soul" is used, which means that the seller takes the initiative and offers his goods for sale. The subtlety of expression in the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* is clearly greater, because someone who willingly places his life on the platter of sincerity and offers it for sale cannot be compared to someone who agrees to do so only after the buyer's encouragement and request, although such an act is undoubtedly also very valuable.

Furthermore, the verse under discussion begins with the partitive preposition "min" (*min*) in "And among the people," meaning that only some people are capable of such an extraordinary act. In contrast, the other two verses, which discuss the exchange of one's life for paradise or salvation from hell, have a general and universal aspect ("has bought from the faithful").

The Connection Between the Verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* and the Preceding Verses

If we carefully study the three verses that precede the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt*, the magnitude of Ali's (a.s.) deed on that perilous night and

his elevated status with the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) becomes clearer. Consider these verses:

"Among the people is he whose talk about worldly life impresses you, and he holds God witness to what is in his heart, though he is the staunchest of enemies." God is aware of the inner nature of these hypocritical flatterers with their pleasing exterior, even though they call upon God as witness to what is in their hearts. These outwardly pleasing hypocrites are the most stubborn[13] enemies of Islam. These verses refer to Akhnas ibn Sharīq, who was among the hypocrites and two-faced individuals known for his eloquence, pleasant demeanor, and appealing exterior. His outward conduct was so appropriate that it would attract any observer. He feigned holiness, faith, and piety, but he was a base and faithless person who had no genuine belief in God or the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) .[14] In the following verse, God explains the reason for Akhnas's hypocrisy and enmity:

"And if he were to wield authority, he would try to cause corruption in the land, and to ruin the crop and the stock, and God does not like corruption" .[15] It is also possible that the word "authority" (*tawallā*) here means governance and rule; meaning, when such people attain power and authority, they become corrupt on earth and spread the seeds of corruption everywhere; they destroy crops and annihilate livestock. Akhnas the hypocrite entered one of the Muslim territories and began to spread corruption and destruction there; he destroyed the crops of the Muslims in that area and eliminated their animals .[16] However, when he would come before the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), he would begin to flatter, ingratiate himself, and engage in smooth talk.

"And when he is told, 'Be wary of God,' conceit seizes him sinfully; so let hell suffice him, and it is surely an evil resting place!" When these hypocrites were reminded to fear God and not to pollute themselves with these inhuman acts—in short, when someone would command them to good and forbid them from evil—not only would they not listen, but their obstinacy would increase, and their selfishness, arrogance, and prejudice would drive them to repeat and

persist in their sins. And it is clear that for such people hell suffices, and what an evil place hell is.

In summary, these three verses present a clear picture of the most stubborn enemies of Islam and the most despised people. When we place these three verses alongside the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt*, it must be that the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* speaks of the most beloved and devoted believers in relation to Islam and Muslims. Therefore, Ali (a.s.), about whom the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* was revealed and who sincerely offered his life in this event, was the most beloved person to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

And without doubt, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) affection for people was based on their faith and love for God, not on other matters.

The Connection Between the Verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* and the Authority of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.)

Question: What connection does this noble verse have with the authority (*wilāya*) and caliphate of Ali (a.s.) as the first caliph and Imam of the Muslims? In other words, even if the Sunnis accept that the above verse was revealed concerning Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), how can this verse be used to prove that Ali (a.s.) is the immediate successor of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.)?

From the previous discussions, it became clear that Ali (a.s.) was the most self-sacrificing, bravest, most altruistic, and most sincere of God's servants after the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). On the other hand, we know that the Imam and caliph after the Prophet (s.a.w.) must be the most knowledgeable, bravest, most self-sacrificing, and most altruistic among the Muslims. Therefore, if the matter of leadership (*imāma*) and caliphate is appointive, meaning that God appoints the Prophet's successor just as He appointed the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself, then given the existence of Ali (a.s.) who possesses the above qualifications, God's wisdom would not allow another person to be appointed as successor. And if this matter is elective (as our Sunni brothers believe), reason dictates that when someone possesses these qualities, we should not turn to others. Therefore, choosing someone

other than Ali (a.s.), considering what has been discussed, is contrary to both reason and religious law.

Response to Some Baseless Objections!

Perhaps due to the connection this verse has with the matter of the caliphate and leadership of Ali (a.s.), some have tried to divert the verse from its original course, so that it cannot be used as evidence for immediate succession to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). Here we address some of these baseless objections and doubts and provide their answers.

1. The Verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* Refers to Those Who Command Good!

The late Allāma Ṭabrisī, the famous Shi'i exegete, narrates an incomplete report from Sunni sources according to which this verse was revealed concerning those who were killed while commanding good and forbidding evil .[17] Therefore, the verse under discussion has no connection to the caliphate and leadership of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.).

Response: The context of the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* shows that this verse is not about those who command good and forbid evil; because as previously explained, the person referred to in this noble verse faces a great danger - a danger at the threshold of death and loss of life - and such danger rarely exists for those who command good and forbid evil.

Therefore, consideration of the context of this noble verse indicates that it does not relate to those who command good and forbid evil. Furthermore, the above narration is incomplete (*mursala*) and not authoritative.

2. The Verse Under Discussion is About Abu Dharr!

Some believe this verse was revealed about Abu Dharr al-Ghifārī ,[18] the distinguished and elevated companion of the Prophet of Islam

(s.a.w.), and has no connection to the matter of leadership and caliphate of Ali (a.s.).[19]

Response: This belief also does not correspond to reality; because we - as history testifies - do not find any important incident in Abu Dharr al-Ghifārī's life during the time of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) where his life was threatened. Therefore, one cannot believe that this noble verse was revealed about him, even though Abu Dharr al-Ghifārī's personality and services, especially after the passing of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and during the bitter era of silence and suppression, are clear and evident to all.

3. This Verse is About All the Emigrants and Helpers!

Another group has said: "The noble verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* relates to all the emigrants (*muhājirīn*) and helpers (*anṣār*).[20]" That is, all Muslims during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who existed when this verse was revealed are included in this verse. Therefore, the verse under discussion is not exclusive to Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.).

Response: The invalidity of this claim is very clear; because the verse explicitly assigns this honor to some Muslims and negates its applicability to all Muslims. Therefore, one cannot claim that all emigrants and helpers are included in the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt*.

4. Did Ali (a.s.) Know Whether He Would Survive or Not?

Question: Was Ali (a.s.) aware of the outcome? Did he know that he would survive this great danger and remain alive, or not? If he knew that the polytheists would not kill him and that he would ultimately survive, then his sleeping in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) bed would not be considered an honor for him. And if he did not know, then this act is a great honor, but it poses another problem: The Imams possess knowledge of the unseen, so how could he not have known the outcome of this action?

Response: According to the research of great scholars and the explicit statement of some narrations, the knowledge of the Imams

(a.s.) regarding the unseen and the future was volitional knowledge (*'ulūm irādī*); meaning they knew whatever they willed to know, and what they did not will to know, they did not know .[21] It is possible that in this incident, he did not will to know the outcome, thus the possibility of danger existed in his mind, and yet he was still willing to make this great sacrifice and show this great altruism. Therefore, this incident was indeed a great honor for him and does not contradict the Imams' (a.s.) knowledge of the unseen. Understanding this point resolves many of the doubts, objections, and questions that arise concerning the Imams' (a.s.) knowledge of the unseen.

Question: You said: "Ali (a.s.), according to volitional knowledge, chose not to know what his fate would be; therefore, there was a possibility of danger for him. Thus, his sleeping in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) bed is considered a great virtue for him." However, according to some narrations: "He knew that he would not be harmed in this incident, and according to this hadith, the Prophet (s.a.w.) guaranteed his safety."[22] Therefore, how can the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* be considered a virtue for him?

Response: This objection can be answered in two ways:

a.This hadith is disconnected (*mursala*) and has no chain of transmission. The late 'Allāma Amīnī quoted this hadith without a chain of transmission from the exegesis (*tafsīr*) of Tha'labī ,[23] and since it has no chain of transmission, it cannot be relied upon or trusted .[24]

b.Three conditions are necessary for accepting any narration; first, its chain of transmission must be reliable; second, the narration must not contradict the verses of the Qur'an; and third, it must be acceptable to religious scholars and experts. The narration in question, in addition to being unacceptable in terms of its chain of transmission, also contradicts the Qur'an! This is because God describes Ali's (a.s.) action in the verse of *Laylat al-Mabīt* as a magnificent deed and a transaction with God, whereas if the above narration were reliable, Ali's (a.s.) action would have no magnificence and would be considered an ordinary matter. Therefore, one cannot rely on such a narration that contradicts one of the verses of the Qur'an and use it to

question the unique and magnificent deed of Ali (a.s.) (please note carefully).

5. Who Were the Addressees of the Prophet (s.a.w.)?

Question: Some believe: "When the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) intended to have someone take his place in his bed, he addressed his companions saying: 'Which one of you is willing to rest in my bed on this (dangerous) night?' But no one except Ali ibn Abi Talib responded and declared his readiness to accept this danger."

Is this account accurate, or did the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) discuss this matter only with Ali (a.s.)?

Response: We have not seen in reliable books that the Prophet (s.a.w.) shared this matter with all his companions. Moreover, this claim is not compatible with reason, because if all his companions had been informed of this matter, it would have eventually spread, and the enemies of Islam would have become aware of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) plan and prevented its execution. Therefore, it appears that this plan and strategy was completely secret and covert, and apart from the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), Ali (a.s.), and a few others, the general Muslim population was unaware of it.

Supplementary Discussions

1. Ḥassān ibn Thābit's Poetry Describing Ali's (a.s.) Self-Sacrifice

Ḥassān ibn Thābit ,[25] one of the contemporary poets of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), who had a special affection for the Prophet's true successor and composed the finest poetry describing the important historical event of Ghadīr Khumm, wrote various poems about the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.). Part of these poems concerns the Night of Sleep (*Laylat al-Mabīt*). Here are some of the elegant and beautiful verses from this masterful Arab poet:

"Who was it that gave charity with his ring while bowing, And kept this deed secret within himself?

Who was it that slept in Muhammad's bed, While Muhammad journeyed towards the cave?

Who was it that was named 'believer' in the Qur'an, In nine verses that were richly revealed?"[26]

In summary, the event of the Night of Sleep (*Laylat al-Mabīt*) was so well-known and famous that it was even reflected in the poetry of Arab poets.[27]

2. The Fate of Ali (a.s.) on that Perilous Night!

The enemies of Islam, after positioning their forces, intended to attack the Prophet's (s.a.w.) house at night and execute their sinister plan. However, one of the polytheist leaders (Abu Jahl or Abu Lahab) prevented this action, saying: "Do not attack at night, for the women and children inside the house will be terrified; they are innocent!"[28] For this reason, the attack was delayed, and they decided to carry out their plan in the morning. At dawn, they stormed the Prophet's (s.a.w.) residence with the intention of killing him. Before they could reach the Prophet's (s.a.w.) bed, Ali (a.s.) rose and called out: "What do you want?" The polytheists, stunned to find Ali in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) bed, said: "O Ali! We are looking for Muhammad, where is he?" He replied: "Did you entrust him to me that you now ask me about his whereabouts?" The enemy was bewildered by this turn of events, unsure whether to kill Ali or let him go. Abu Jahl said: "Leave this young man alone; Muhammad has deceived him and made him sleep in his bed to save his own life!" When Ali (a.s.) heard this insulting statement, which was both an affront to his beloved Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and to himself, he responded with utmost courage and bravery:

"O Abu Jahl, do you say this? He has given me such Intellect (*'aql*) that if it were divided among all the foolish and insane people of the world, they would become wise through it. And such strength that if it were divided among all the weak people of the world, they would

become strong through it. And such courage that if it were divided among all the cowards of the world, they would become brave through it."[29]

I have recognized the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and consciously accepted Islam, and therefore I have placed my life on the platter of sincerity. After this exchange, the enemies of Islam left the Prophet's (s.a.w.) house, dejected and disappointed, while Ali (a.s.) proudly and happily completed this part of his mission.

3. God Takes Pride in Ali's (a.s.) Sacrifice!

Tha'labī, one of the well-known Sunni exegetes, when reaching the exegesis of the verse under discussion, narrates a beautiful tradition regarding the Night of Sleep (*Laylat al-Mabīt*). Consider this tradition:

On the night when Ali (a.s.) slept in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) bed, God addressed Gabriel and Michael: "You two are brothers. If God were to take the life of one of you, would the other be willing to sacrifice and give from his own life to him?"

Neither of them spoke or declared their readiness for this matter! God said to them: "Look at the house of Our Prophet on earth, see how Ali has put his own life in danger to protect the Prophet's life! Go and watch over Ali." Gabriel and Michael descended to earth and appeared at the house of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). Gabriel stood at Ali's (a.s.) head and Michael at his feet to protect Ali's life. Then they both addressed Ali (a.s.), saying:

"Bravo, bravo to you, O son of Abu Talib! Who is like you? For God has boasted of you to the angels of the heavens and taken pride in you." [30]

Can any station higher than this be imagined?! It is not without reason that the Shi'i has come to the door of this magnificent household. The Shi'i's following of Ali (a.s.) is not blind or based on prejudice, but rather due to his extraordinary stations and virtues.

The Message of the Verse

Everything in the Path of God's Satisfaction

Although this verse - as mentioned in previous discussions - was revealed about Ali (a.s.) on the night of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) migration, like other verses of the Qur'an, it contains a universal and general ruling. Since this verse stands in contrast to the verse "And among the people is one whose speech pleases you...", it becomes clear that this group of people mentioned in the verse stands opposite to the previous group, and their qualities are also opposite to them. Those people were self-centered, stubborn, and obstinate, who gained honor and respect among people through hypocrisy and outwardly presented themselves as well-wishers and believers, but their actions resulted in nothing but corruption on earth and the destruction of people. However, this group deals only with God and sells everything they have, even their lives, to Him, and seek nothing but His satisfaction, recognizing no honor or dignity except through God.

It is through the sacrifices of these people that the affairs of religion and world are reformed, truth and reality are kept alive and sustained, human life becomes pleasant, and the tree of Islam bears fruit.[31]

The message of this noble verse to all Muslims is that they should remove themselves from the first group and join the ranks of the second group. Of course, this is not an easy task!

1. God Almighty refers to this matter in verse 30 of Sūrat al-Anfāl; in this noble verse we read: "And [remember, O Muḥammad]:, when those who disbelieved plotted against you to restrain you or kill you or evict you [from Makkah]:. But they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of planners."

2. Note that Imam Ali (a.s.) does not ask about the dangers that

might threaten his own life, but rather what concerns him is the safety of the precious existence of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and when he becomes assured of his safety, he accepts all dangers and sleeps in his bed!

3. For detailed account of *Laylat al-Mabīt*, refer to *Furūgh-i Abadiyyat*, 1/417 onwards.

4. *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 2/99-101 (quoted from *al-Ghadīr*, 2/48)

5. *Sīrat Ibn Hishām*, 2/291 (quoted from *al-Ghadīr*, 2/48)

6. *al-Sīrat al-Ḥalabiyya*, 2/29 (quoted from *al-Ghadīr*, 2/49)

7. *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, 2/29 (quoted from *al-Ghadīr*, 2/48)

8. *Musnad Aḥmad*, 1/348 (quoted from *al-Ghadīr*, 2/48)

9. *Tadhkirat Ibn al-Jawzī*, p. 21 (quoted from *al-Ghadīr*, 2/48)

10. *Fuṣūl Ibn Ṣabbāgh al-Mālikī*, p. 33 (quoted from *al-Ghadīr*, 2/48)

11. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 13/261

12. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 67/186 (Quoted from *Mithāl-hāy-i Zībā-yi Qur'ān*, 1/126).

13. The word *ladūd* means stubborn enemy, and the phrase *aladu l-khiṣām* means the most stubborn enemies of Islam.

14. *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 2/43.

15. This noble verse shows that Islam, fourteen hundred years ago, placed special importance on environmental protection, thus considering damage to the environment as a form of "corruption on earth" (*fasād fī l-arḍ*) and identified it as one of the signs and marks of hypocrisy and enmity towards Islam. Numerous examples regarding the environment can be found in other Qur'ānic verses and Islamic traditions.

16. *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 2/44.

17. *Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/301.

18. Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī's name was "Jundub" and some mention his father's name as "Junāda" while others mention "al-Sakan". He was among the great companions of the Prophet and a person of high status and great dignity. Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī was among the few individuals who did not pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr. (*Mustadrakāt 'Ilm al-Rijāl*, 2/240)

19. *Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/301.

20. Ibid.

21. For a detailed explanation of this matter, please refer to *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 7/249 onwards.

22. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 13/262.

23. *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/48.

24. Abu Ja'far Iskāfī, teacher of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, has an interesting response to this objection. He says: This is an obvious lie and no such thing has been narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.). He then considers the above narration to be among the fabrications of a person named "Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm" which "Jāḥiẓ" took from him. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 13/263.

25. He was born eight years before the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and lived many years after him. He was among the poets who had a long life, living for one hundred and twenty years. The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) had ordered that a pulpit be placed in Masjid al-Nabī for Ḥassān ibn Thābit, this talented and skilled poet. The Prophet would sometimes order him to stand on that pulpit and recite poetry. Some misguided people would object to his work saying: "The mosque is not a place for poetry!" The Prophet (s.a.w.) would respond to these people saying: "Be quiet! Ḥassān's poetry is more effective than arrows on the battlefield; indeed its impact is stronger than arrows!" After the passing of the Prophet (s.a.w.), he faced unkindness from the first and second caliphs who prevented Ḥassān from reciting poetry in Masjid al-Nabī. The reason for this is clear to dear readers - yes, his crime was defending 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), the hero of Ghadīr Khumm! From this talented poet, there exists a collection of poetry, with an important portion of his poems being in praise of the true successor of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

26. 'Allāma Amīnī, in addition to mentioning the nine verses that Ḥassān ibn Thābit referred to, has cited another verse on this subject. The mentioned verses are as follows: 1. Qur'ān, 18:18 2. Qur'ān, 8:62 3. Qur'ān, 8:64 4. Qur'ān, 33:23 5. Qur'ān, 5:55 6. Qur'ān, 9:19 7. Qur'ān, 19:96 8. Qur'ān, 45:21 9. Qur'ān, 98:7 10. Sūrat al-'Aṣr. (*al-Ghadīr*, 2/49-58)

27. *al-Ghadīr*, 2/47

28. Compare this statement with the dark record and actions of the false claimants of human rights, to see that these pretentious humans have been more savage than the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance; for today we witness that America and England, in their attacks on the oppressed, defenseless, and innocent people of Afghanistan, show mercy to no one; women, children, elderly men, elderly women, and even hospital patients are not safe from their savage attacks!

29. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 19/83

30. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 19/85

31. *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 2/47.

12

DO YOU REGARD THE PROVIDING OF WATER TO HAJJ PILGRIMS AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE HOLY MOSQUE AS SIMILAR...

"Do you regard the providing of water to hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque as similar [in worth] to someone who has faith in God and [believes in] the Last Day and wages jihad in the way of God? They are not equal with God, and God does not guide the wrongdoing lot. Those who have believed and migrated, and waged jihad in the way of God with their possessions and persons have a greater rank near God, and it is they who are the triumphant. Their Lord gives them the good news of His mercy and [His] pleasure, and for them there will be gardens with lasting bliss, to remain in them forever. With God indeed is a great reward."

(*Sūrat al-Tawba*, verses 19-22)

Overview of the Discussion

This noble verse, known among exegetes as the verse of providing water to pilgrims (*siqāyat al-ḥājj*), points to another of Ali's (a.s.) virtues through which his authority (*wilāya*) and succession (*khilāfa*) can be proven. It questions those who consider "providing water to pilgrims" (*siqāyat al-ḥājj*) and "maintaining the Sacred Mosque" (*'imārat al-masjid al-ḥarām*) equal

to "faith in God, migration in His way, and striving with one's life and wealth." We will provide further explanation as we continue the discussion.

Occasion of Revelation

The verse about "providing water to pilgrims" (*siqāyat al-ḥājj*) relates an incident that occurred during the prophetic era and is not merely stating a general principle; that is, such a comparison actually took place.

Therefore, this noble verse has an occasion of revelation, and several accounts have been mentioned for it. The summary of the most well-known account is as follows:

Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, and Shayba, who was from the descendants of Abd al-Muṭṭalib, were conversing in the Sacred Mosque.

Abbas said to Shayba, "God has bestowed upon me an honor that He has not given to anyone else, and that is providing water to pilgrims (*siqāyat al-ḥājj*).[1]"

Shayba replied, "God has bestowed upon me the honor of maintaining the Sacred Mosque (*'imārat al-masjid al-ḥarām*),[2] and there is no honor greater than being the keeper of the Ka'ba's keys. Therefore, the honor bestowed upon me is greater than yours."

Ali (a.s.), who was passing by and heard their conversation, approached them, and after greeting them and showing respect, asked permission to speak, which was granted.

He said, "God has bestowed upon me an honor that is greater than all honors and has not been given to anyone else!"

They asked, "What is it?"

He said, "I was the first among you all to believe, and I migrated before everyone else for God's pleasure, and I strove in God's path with my wealth and life! You and those like you became Muslims and accepted Islam through the blessing of my striving and the striving of those like me! Therefore, the highest honor is not 'providing water to pilgrims' (*siqāyat al-ḥājj*) or 'maintaining the Sacred Mosque' (*'imārat*

al-masjid al-ḥarām), but rather 'faith in God,' 'migration for His pleasure,' and 'striving in His path.'"

Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, and Ali (a.s.) became angry and upset upon hearing these words. They went to the Prophet (s.a.w.), related the incident to him, and complained about Ali, saying that he had questioned their position and status.

The Prophet sent someone to summon Ali (a.s.). When Ali came to the Prophet (s.a.w.), he asked him for an explanation, saying, "What did you say that has angered your uncle Abbas?"

Ali replied, "I spoke the truth, and my uncle is upset by my truthful words." He then recounted what had happened to the Prophet (s.a.w.).

He also added that he was not trying to praise himself, but rather wanted to tell them that "providing water to pilgrims" (*siqāyat al-ḥājj*) and "maintaining the Sacred Mosque" (*'imārat al-masjid al-ḥarām*) were not the highest honors, and that there were greater honors than these. At this point, the verse about providing water to pilgrims was revealed, and God confirmed Ali's (a.s.) words .[3]

This occasion of revelation is recorded in at least twelve well-known Sunni books dealing with Qur'anic exegesis, history, or traditions:

1- *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, written by Allama Wāḥidī[4]

2- The exegesis of Allama Khāzin al-Baghdādī[5]

3- The exegesis of Allama al-Qurṭubī[6]

4- The exegesis of Fakhr Rāzī[7]

5- *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, written by Allama al-Suyūṭī[8]

6- The exegesis of Abu l-Barakāt al-Nasafī[9]

7- *Al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimma*, written by Ibn Ṣabbāgh al-Mālikī[10]

8- *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib* by Ganjī al-Shāfi'ī[11]

9- The history of Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī[12]

10- *Manāqib* of Ibn Maghāzilī[13]

11- The history of Ibn 'Asākir[14]

12- *Rabī' al-Abrār*, written by Zamakhsharī[15]

Therefore, there is no room for doubt or discussion regarding the above occasion of revelation.

An Important Point!

At the time of the revelation of the verse about providing water to pilgrims, Abbas ibn Abd al-Muṭṭalib had undoubtedly embraced faith and participated in striving, just as Shayba had faith and had strived. So how could Ali (a.s.) boast of his faith and striving to them when they also possessed these qualities?

The answer to this question is that Ali (a.s.) wanted to say that he was the first among men to believe in the Messenger of God (s.a.w.), and the first person to migrate after the Prophet's (s.a.w.) migration to Medina, and the first to strive in the path of God and His Messenger. Being foremost in Islam, migration, and striving, which Abbas and Shayba did not possess, is a unique virtue of Ali (a.s.).

Commentary and Explanation

Faith in God, Superior to Everything!

"Do you regard the providing of water to hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque as similar [in worth] to someone who has faith in God and [believes in] the Last Day and wages jihad in the way of God? They are not equal with God." From the expression of this noble verse, it becomes clear that such a comparison was made and someone considered "providing water to pilgrims" (*siqāyat al-ḥājj*) and "maintenance of the Holy Mosque" (*'imārat al-masjid al-ḥarām*) to be on par with "faith in God" and "striving in God's path" - as previously explained - but God does not consider this comparison valid and does not view "faith in God and the Last Day" and "striving in God's path" as comparable to "providing water to pilgrims" and "maintenance of the Holy Mosque."

This is because faith and striving are undoubtedly superior to those two.

"And God does not guide the wrongdoing lot." Perhaps this expression indicates that not only is the aforementioned comparison

incorrect and "faith" and "striving" are superior to "providing water to pilgrims" and "maintenance of the Holy Mosque," but also that this comparison is a kind of injustice and wrong against the one who was foremost in faith in God and the Last Day and striving in God's path.

"Those who have believed and migrated, and waged jihad in the way of God with their possessions and persons have a greater rank near God, and it is they who are the triumphant."

After rejecting the initial comparison in the first verse and considering it a kind of injustice, God explicitly states in this verse that faith, migration, and striving are more important and valuable.

"Their Lord gives them the good news of His mercy and [His] pleasure" - After rejecting the comparison between "faith," "striving," and "migration" on one side, and "providing water to pilgrims" (*siqāyat al-ḥājj*) and "maintenance of the Holy Mosque" (*'imārat al-masjid al-ḥarām*) on the other, and emphasizing that the first three matters are more valuable, in the next two verses God gives glad tidings to those who possess faith and engage in striving and migration. Consider these glad tidings:

1- God gives these people the glad tidings of His mercy and nearness to Him.

2- The second spiritual glad tiding for these individuals is God's pleasure, and what blessing could be greater than knowing that one's beloved is pleased and satisfied with them.

3- "And gardens wherein they will have lasting bliss, to abide therein forever" - Their third reward is gardens in paradise (note that the expression refers to gardens, not a single garden) containing various types of imperishable blessings. One of the problems and defects of worldly blessings is their impermanence; however, the blessings of the hereafter are neither unstable nor impermanent.

"With God indeed is a great reward" - Does this statement point to another blessing that God has prepared for the people of faith, striving, and migration; a blessing that is in addition to nearness to God, His pleasure, and the gardens of paradise; a blessing that neither occurs to human thought nor can anyone describe or explain it, and thus it has been expressed in a concealed manner? Or does it

refer to the previous three blessings and emphasize them? Neither of these two possibilities is far-fetched.

The Connection Between the Verse of *Siqāyat al-Ḥājj* and Divine Authority

Since the virtue of precedence in faith and striving belongs to Ali (a.s.), and no other Muslim man possesses such virtue, therefore Ali (a.s.) is the most excellent among Muslims. It is clear that if God wishes to appoint a successor to His Prophet, He would not turn to one who is less excellent (*mafḍūl*) or even excellent (*fāḍil*) when the most excellent (*afḍal*) is present; for God is wise, and prioritizing the less excellent over the excellent, or the excellent over the most excellent, contradicts wisdom.

Even if the caliphate were to be elective, rational people would not turn to the excellent or less excellent when the most excellent is present. Therefore, one can prove his divine authority through the above verse.

An Admission from a Sunni Scholar!

One Sunni scholar said:

"You Shi'is can prove all your religious principles and beliefs through the narrations present in our books; because in our books there are so many narrations regarding your beliefs and views that make this possible!"

Then, in explaining this matter, he said: "Our predecessors were simple people; whenever they found a narration, they would record it in their books."[16]

We are astonished by this contradiction; for they say in praise of their books, especially the "Six Sound Collections" (*Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta*):

"The narrations in these books were selected with great precision and all their narrations are reliable; for sometimes out of a thousand narrations, only a few were selected!"[17] Is this statement not contradictory to what that Sunni scholar said? Such contradictions result

from when one first makes a decision and then tries to make the verses of the Qur'an and narrations conform to it! However, if one first kneels at the threshold of the Qur'an and narrations, and chooses what is derived from these two pure and flowing springs, one will never encounter such contradictions.

The Message of the Verse

Practical Following of Religious Leaders

Describing the virtues, merits, and moral, social, and political characteristics of the pure Imams (a.s.) is a commendable and necessary task, but it is not sufficient and we should not be content with just that! Rather, we must make these characteristics the guiding principles of our individual and social lives. In the verses that we discussed, three things were mentioned as the three important pillars of Islam, and Ali (a.s.) was praised at the highest level for possessing these three qualities. These three fundamental principles are: "faith" (*īmān*), "migration" (*hijra*), and "striving in the way of God with wealth and life" (*jihād*). If we wish to follow in the footsteps of Ali (a.s.) and other religious leaders, we must revive these three principles within ourselves.

There are two ways to strengthen faith: First, through deeper study of that which we believe in. For example, to strengthen faith in God, we must expand our study of the mysteries of creation. For greater faith in the Qur'an, we must engage in more contemplation and reflection on the beautiful verses of this divine book. In short, to strengthen faith in anything, studying about that thing is an effective approach. The second way is through self-development and inner purification, because faith is a light that shines in the mirror of the human heart, and the clearer and more transparent the mirror of the heart becomes, the better it reflects the light of faith.

If a heart becomes (God forbid) polluted with sin and the rust of

disobedience darkens the mirror of the heart, naturally the radiance of the light of faith diminishes in such a heart.

As for migration (*hijra*), some imagine that this important religious principle was specific to the Muslims of early Islam, and that after the Muslims' migration to Medina, its chapter was closed. However, from the narrations of the People of the House (a.s.), we understand something different. In a hadith from Ali (a.s.), we read:

"Migration continues according to its original principle"[18]

Therefore, migration, like faith and struggle (*jihād*), continues until the Day of Resurrection, and Muslims are obligated to perform it. Of course, in many cases, the form of migration changes. For this reason, in a narration from Imam Ali (a.s.), we read:

"A person says 'I have migrated,' but has not truly migrated. The true migrant (*muhājir*) is one who migrates from evil deeds and does not return to them"[19]

Yes, the true migrant is one who migrates from ugliness, sins, and impurities toward obedience, servitude, God-consciousness (*taqwā*), and purity. The genuine migrant is one who migrates and distances himself from unsuitable friends and gatherings tainted by sin. Migration from unlawful wealth, from unlawful positions, from sins - these are necessary and obligatory. And it is clear that this form of migration was not specific to the Muslims of early Islam but is the duty of all Muslims until the Day of Resurrection.

As for the third principle, struggle (*jihād*) with one's life and wealth, this too is a trial (*ibtilā'*) for Muslims in all times and places. Struggle with life and wealth can never be suspended, especially in the presence of enemies who, in the words of the Qur'an, clearly show hatred and enmity in their countenance: "Hatred has already shown itself from their mouths" .[20] These are enemies who are not bound by any human principles and are willing to commit any crime to preserve their illegitimate interests. Against such dangerous enemies, one must always be ready for defense and struggle; and the spirit of valor and warriorship must always be kept alive in Muslim youth. For this reason, we believe that those who try to weaken or destroy the spirit of warriorship in Muslim youth through unhealthy

games or excessive healthy entertainments have committed a great betrayal against themselves, their country, and Islam.

O Lord! Make the light of faith burn brighter in our hearts so that in the light of faith we may migrate from the dark and gloomy land of sin, and through struggle in God's path, we may also save others.

Supplementary Discussions

1. Why is Ali's (a.s.) Name Not Mentioned in the Qur'an?

Question: If Ali (a.s.) is the immediate successor of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) (as you believe and seek to prove through arguments from verses of the Qur'an), then why is his name not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, so that all these discussions and disagreements would not arise?

Answer: Given that "Ali" was not exclusively the name of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), just as "Abu Ṭālib" was not exclusively the epithet of his noble father, but rather "Ali" and "Abu Ṭālib" were the name and epithet of numerous individuals among the Arabs, therefore even if the name "Ali" had been explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, those who did not want to accept this truth would still have had an excuse and would have applied it to another "Ali."

For this reason, it is better to introduce him by presenting the distinctive and unique characteristics and qualities of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), so that they cannot be applied to anyone except his sacred person. Therefore, God has chosen this approach in the Qur'an, and by mentioning his special virtues in certain verses, has introduced him as the guardian of the believers and the immediate successor of the Prophet (s.a.w.), even though those whose hearts contain illness and deviation interpret these verses differently.

Another Question: In a Hadith we read:

"Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān came to the eighth Imam, Imam Riḍā (a.s.), and said:

Some people ask where is Ali's (a.s.) name mentioned in the Qur'an?

I answer them with: 'And We gave them out of Our mercy, and conferred on them a worthy and lofty (*'aliyyan*) repute'[21]"

The Imam said:

"You speak the truth, it is thus[22]"

Does this narration accord with what you said, that Ali's (a.s.) name is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an?

Answer: Without doubt, the word "lofty" (*'aliyyan*) that appears in this noble verse is not a proper name (or in technical terms, not a proper noun), but rather has an adjectival aspect and appears as a descriptor for the word "repute" (*lisān*). As for the mentioned Hadith, it lacks credibility from the perspective of its chain of transmission; for one of its narrators is "Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Sayyārī" who is a very weak transmitter. He is someone who extensively transmitted narrations about the corruption of the Qur'an; for this reason, narrations in which he appears in the chain of transmission are unacceptable and lack credibility. The late ʿAllāma Ardabīlī writes about him: "He was a weak man with corrupt doctrine, and his narrations are hollow and unreliable .[23]" Therefore, the above narration is not credible.

2. Why Did the Prophet (s.a.w.) Not Destroy the Hypocrites?

Question: Without doubt, the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*) in the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and after his passing inflicted irreparable damage on the newly established body of Islam, and were the primary instigators of the deviation of the caliphate and guardianship. The Prophet (s.a.w.) certainly knew these individuals and had discovered their hypocrisy. Given this, why did the Prophet (s.a.w.) not execute them during his time, so that all this damage would not be inflicted upon Islam and the Muslims?

Answer: The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) himself has answered this question in a Hadith. In the mentioned Hadith we read:

"If I did not fear this accusation - that people would say: 'Muhammad sought help from some people at the beginning of his prophethood and achieved victory with their help and support, then after establishing the foundations of his government, he killed his old friends' - I would have executed many of the hypocrites and relieved Islam from their evil."[24]

However, considering this accusation, which would actually cause people to doubt the foundations of prophethood, and to prevent such misconceptions, the Prophet did not take action against the hypocrites and endured their sabotage.

1. Providing water to pilgrims in Minā, ʿArafāt, and Mashʿar al-Ḥarām during the Hajj season is called *siqāyat al-ḥājj*. These three sacred lands never had their own water sources and have always relied on water from other locations. Even today, the water used by pilgrims in these three holy places is supplied from Mecca or other places through pipeline networks. In ancient times, pilgrims had to carry their required water from Mecca when they were in Minā, ʿArafāt, and Mashʿar al-Ḥarām. For this reason, the eighth day of Dhū al-Ḥijja, when pilgrims would prepare and load water on their camels, was called *yawm al-tarwiya* (the day of collecting water). In any case, ʿAbbās, the Prophet's uncle, was responsible for providing water to pilgrims during his time, and this responsibility was especially important in that era, as water was the pilgrims' most essential need in Minā, Mashʿar al-Ḥarām, and ʿArafāt.

2. Given the extraordinary importance of the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*, which according to the Holy Qurʾān is the first house built and the most sacred place on earth, such that each prayer unit (*rakʿa*) performed there (according to some traditions) equals one million prayer units performed elsewhere, the matter of "custodianship of the Kaʿba" and "maintenance of the Sacred Mosque" (*ʿimārat al-masjid al-ḥarām*) holds special significance. The custodian of the

Ka'ba was responsible for protecting, preserving, repairing, and reconstructing the Holy Ka'ba and the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*.

3. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/249 onwards.

4. *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 182 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/123).

5. *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, 3/57 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/123).

6. *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 8/91 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/125).

7. *Tafsīr Fakhr Rāzī*, 16/10 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/125).

8. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 3/218 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/126).

9. *Tafsīr al-Nasafī*, 2/221 (cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/54).

10. *Fuṣūl al-Muhimma*, 106 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/126).

11. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, 113 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/125).

12. Cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/54-55.

13. Cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/54-55.

14. Cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/54-55.

15. Cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/54-55.

16. What is meant by this statement? Does it mean that the mentioned narrations are reliable, but since they don't align with certain people's taste, they shouldn't be narrated?! Or does it mean that such narrations are not reliable? In that case, what guarantee is there for the reliability of other hadiths in the six authentic collections?!

17. Imam Bukhari, one of the authors of the six authentic collections, says: "I selected the narrations of this book (which contains more than seven thousand authentic hadiths) from among six hundred thousand narrations over sixteen years!" Refer to *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, volume 1, biography of Imam Bukhari.

18. *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, chapter 3989, hadith 20755, (10/302).

19. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 97/99.

20. Qur'ān, 3:118.

21. Qur'ān, 19:50.

22. *Al-Burhān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 3/14.

23. *Jāmi' al-Ruwāt*, 1/67.

24. *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 18, chapters on the punishment of apostasy, chapter 5, hadith 3.

13

BUT IF THEY DESIRE TO DECEIVE YOU, GOD IS INDEED SUFFICIENT FOR YOU. IT IS HE WHO STRENGTHENED YOU WITH HIS HELP...

"But if they desire to deceive you, God is indeed sufficient for you. It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the means of the faithful."

(*Sūrat al-Anfāl*, verse 62)

Overview of the Discussion

This verse, which is known as the verse of support (*nuṣrat*), is another of the verses about the virtues of Ali (a.s.).

Question: The topic of discussion is the verses related to his authority (*wilāya*). What is the connection between verses about virtues and authority?

Answer: The verses used to prove the immediate succession and authority of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) are of two types:

First, verses that directly and clearly indicate his authority, such as the verse of "perfection of religion" (*ikmāl al-dīn*), the "verse of authority" (*āyat al-wilāya*), and similar verses that were discussed in the first chapter.

Second, verses that do not directly indicate his authority, but rather contain virtues unique to him. However, through rational

reasoning, these verses can also be used indirectly to prove his authority, as was explained in some previous verses and will be explained in the exegesis of the verse of support and other similar verses.

Explanation and Exegesis

Preparation with Full Force

To clarify the exegesis of the verse of support, it is necessary to explain verses 60 to 63 of *Sūrat al-Anfāl*:

"Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses."

This verse is inspiring for all places, times, countries, and historical periods because it does not speak of any specific weapon that might become obsolete with time. Rather, it uses the term "power" (*quwwa*), meaning that Muslims must utilize every weapon to maintain their preparedness. In every era and time, they must be equipped with the most advanced military weapons in the world. The word "power" (*quwwa*) even includes weapons other than military ones. For example, means of propaganda, which constitute a powerful force for destroying the enemy, are also included under "power" (*quwwa*). Similarly, this word encompasses economic, moral, and social matters. In short, anything that is effective in combat with the enemy, prevents enemy aggression, and aids us in defense against the enemy is included under this verse.

"Awing thereby the enemy of God, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know, but God knows them."

In this part of the verse, the purpose of preparing forces and military weapons is explained as follows:

The purpose of this preparedness is not the destruction of people, the devastation of the world, or the killing and plundering of the helpless and deprived! Rather, the purpose is legitimate defense. All forces and weapons must be at our disposal so that the enemy not

only does not dare to attack but does not even entertain the thought of attacking; for oppressors and tyrants always attack weak and powerless countries and individuals, and strength and power are factors that deter them from aggression and war. Increasing military capability is for intimidation (*irhāb*) and frightening the enemy – both the enemies of God and your own enemies, both apparent and visible enemies as well as hidden and concealed ones. Therefore, the purpose of increasing military power must be logical and legitimate defense against potential aggressions.

"And whatever you spend in the way of God will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged." Undoubtedly, strengthening Islam's defensive foundation and raising the military capability of Islam's army and employing the most advanced military, economic, propaganda, moral, social, and similar weapons will have significant costs, which Muslims must provide. However, since these expenses are spent in the way of God, He will return them to you completely, and without doubt, you will not suffer any loss in this transaction.

"And if they incline toward peace, then you [too] incline toward it, and put your trust in God. Indeed He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing." Although Muslims are obligated to use all their power and strength and increase their military capability, if the enemy extends a hand of friendship, Muslims warmly grasp it, and if they call for peace, Muslims will not insist on war. This noble verse is an appropriate response to stubborn and obstinate individuals who insist on portraying Islam as having a harsh and warmongering face, for if Islam were a religion of violence and the sword, it would never call for peace nor warmly grasp a hand extended in peace. Then it warns the Muslims:

"But if they desire to deceive you, God is indeed sufficient for you. It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the means of the faithful." Although Islam calls for peace and responds positively to the enemy's call for peace, it warns Muslims to be wary of the enemy's deception and to maintain their military power and defensive capability at a high level even during peace, so that if the enemy plots and deceives, Muslims will not be caught off guard. For

instance, when the enemy is in a weak position and proposes false peace to rebuild their military forces and reorganize them, keeping Muslims occupied with peace talks until they can strike again after regaining strength; in this case, if Muslims maintain their military power even during peace, they will not be caught off guard and will repel the enemy's plot. Imam Ali (a.s.), in his directive to Mālik al-Ashtar, after advising his brave commander to take advantage of every opportunity for peace that arises, warns him not to be negligent of enemy plots even during times of peace. [1]

Then at the end of the verse, God says: "But if they desire to deceive you, God is indeed sufficient for you. It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the faithful."

"And united their hearts. Had you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but God united them together. Indeed He is All-mighty, All-wise."

The above four verses contain many points for discussion, but we will be content with what has been mentioned and move on to other topics.

Who are the Truly Faithful?

Question: Regarding whom was this noble verse of divine help revealed? And who are meant by the faithful (*mu'minīn*)?

Answer: There are numerous traditions in this regard, which have been mentioned both by 'Allāma Amīnī in *al-Ghadīr*[2] and by the author of *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq* .[3] These traditions are of two types:

First, traditions which state that "The first helper and supporter of the Prophet (s.a.w.) was Ali (a.s.), and the verse of divine help refers to him."

Second, traditions that speak about Ali's (a.s.) support, but do not specifically discuss the application of the verse of divine help to Ali (a.s.). We will be content with citing one tradition from each group:

Ibn 'Asākir, the author of *Tārīkh Dimashq*, narrates the following from Abū Hurayra :[4]

"It is written on the Throne: 'There is no god but Me alone, I have

no partner, and Muhammad is My servant[5] and messenger. I strengthened him through Ali.' And this is [the meaning of] His words: 'It is He who strengthened you with His help and with the faithful.'"[6]

First: Although Abū Hurayra does not explicitly attribute this tradition to the Prophet (s.a.w.), given the phrase "It is written on the Throne" (*maktūb ʿalā l-ʿarsh*), it is clear that he heard it from the Prophet, as he could not make such a claim on his own.

Second: The occasions of revelation (*shaʾn nuzūl*) of Qur'anic verses are of two types:

First, occasions of revelation that are specific to an individual and concern one person, such as the verse of the perfection of religion and the verse of authority (*wilāya*), and others like them, which exclusively concern Ali (a.s.) and do not apply to anyone else.

Second, occasions of revelation that are not specific to one individual and include multiple people, but have one outstanding person and most perfect exemplar who is usually mentioned by name, such as the verse of divine help, which is not exclusively about Ali (a.s.), but he is its most perfect exemplar and outstanding example.

Third: In addition to Ibn ʿAsākir, others have also narrated the above tradition, including:

a- Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī in *al-Riyāḍ*[7]

b- al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*[8]

c- al-Qundūzī in *Yanābīʿ al-Mawadda*[9]

d- ʿAllāma al-Ganjī in *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*[10]

The late ʿAllāma Amīnī narrates many traditions from other narrators that identify Ali (a.s.) as the first companion and helper of the Prophet (s.a.w.), though they do not explicitly state that the noble verse refers to Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib. Among these traditions is a hadith that Anas Mālik narrates from the Prophet (s.a.w.) as follows:

"When I was taken on the night journey: I saw written on the leg of the Throne: 'There is no god but God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God, I strengthened him through Ali, I helped him through Ali.'"[11]

This hadith appears in various Sunni books, including:

1- *Dhakhā'ir al-'Uqbā*[12]
2- *Manāqib Khwārazmī*[13]
3- *Farā'id Ḥamawī*[14]
4- *al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā* of al-Suyūṭī[15] and other books[16]

When it is said that "such-and-such is written on the leg of God's Throne," this indicates the importance of that matter. The fact that Ali's (a.s.) name is written on the divine Throne alongside the blessed names of God and His Prophet proves that Ali (a.s.) was the foremost among Muslims in supporting and helping the Prophet. Naturally, if God were to choose a successor for His Prophet, He would consider the most excellent of Muslims for this purpose, and if Muslims were to choose someone, reason dictates that they should seek such a person

The Message of the Verse

Defending Islam with All One's Might

In the verses we read, you observed that Ali's (a.s.) extraordinary importance was achieved through his support of the Prophet (s.a.w.). The Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) attained this distinguished position through his efforts to defend the leadership of the Muslims. In moments when Islam was on the brink of collapse, we find Ali (a.s.) on the battlefield, defending Islam with all his might.

For example, in the Battle of Uḥud when everyone had fled, Ali (a.s.) alone engaged in fighting the enemy. Ali had no news of the Prophet (s.a.w.), but he knew that the Prophet was not one to turn his back on the battlefield. Therefore, while fighting, he also searched for the Prophet (s.a.w.). He found the Prophet (s.a.w.) in a corner of the battlefield with his blessed tooth broken and blood flowing from his forehead. Like a moth circling its beloved, he moved around him and single-handedly defended the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and the foundation of Islam, sustaining numerous wounds .[17] His Shi'i followers must also defend Islam with their lives, wealth, morals, good conduct,

love, knowledge and learning, and in short, all their abilities and strength, so that God willing, they will be proud on the Day of Resurrection and not be ashamed before the Prophet (s.a.w.) and Ali (a.s.).

1. In the final sections of Mālik al-Ashtar's covenant we read:

2. *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/49 onwards.

3. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/194 onwards.

4. The narrator of the mentioned tradition is not only Abū Hurayra, but Ibn ʿAbbās, Jābir, and Anas have also narrated it.

5. The matter of servitude (*ʿubūdiyyat*) and worship is so important that it is mentioned here before prophethood, just as Muslims in their *tashahhud* also testify to his servitude before testifying to his prophethood!

6. Cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/194.

7. *Al-Riyāḍ*, 2/172 (cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/50).

8. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 3/199 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/194).

9. *Yanābīʿ al-Mawadda*, p. 94 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/194).

10. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, p. 110 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/194).

11. *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 11/173 (cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/50).

12. *Dhakhā'ir al-ʿUqbā*, p. 69 (cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/50).

13. *Manāqib Khwārazmī*, p. 254 (cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/50).

14. *Farā'id Ḥammūyī*, chapter 46 (cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/50).

15. *Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā*, 1/7 (cited from *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/51).

16. Refer to *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/50-51.

17. *Nūr al-Abṣār*, 96-97.

14

'GOD SUFFICES AS A WITNESS BETWEEN ME AND YOU, AND HE WHO POSSESSES THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE BOOK'

"The faithless say, 'You have not been sent [by God].' Say, 'God suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.'"

(*Sūrat al-Ra'd*, verse 43)

Overview of the Discussion

Another verse concerning the special virtues of Ali (a.s.), which can be used as evidence for his authority (*wilāya*), is the verse of the knowledge of the Book. In this noble verse, the Prophet (s.a.w.) names two witnesses who testify to the truth of his claim: one is God, and the other is "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book." How these two serve as witnesses to the truth of the Prophet of Islam's (s.a.w.) claim, and who is meant by "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" will be discussed in detail in upcoming discussions. However, before explaining and providing exegesis of this noble verse, it is necessary to present some preliminary points.

Accept Nothing Without Evidence!

One of the important and fundamental teachings of the Qur'an to all Muslims, indeed to all human beings, is that they should not accept anything without evidence. Yes, from Islam's perspective, accepting any matter must be accompanied by acceptable evidence.

There are four verses in the Qur'an concerning this topic. In these verses we read:

"Produce your evidence"[1]

Sometimes the addressees in these verses are Jews and Christians; God commands His Prophet to tell them that if they are truthful in their claims (that paradise belongs only to them and no one except Jews and Christians will enter paradise), they should present their evidence.

And sometimes the addressees are idol-worshippers, who made empty and baseless claims about idols. They too must have evidence and proof for their claims, otherwise their words will not be accepted.

One of the above verses even refers to the Day of Resurrection - if anyone makes a claim there, it too must be accompanied by the presentation of evidence and proof.

Therefore, from the above verses we understand that for proving any matter ,[2] whether in this world or the hereafter, and from any people or nation, evidence and proof must be presented. If this excellent principle is implemented in a society, it will prevent superstitions and empty, baseless statements. In such a society, rumors, controversies, demagoguery, slander, and accusations cannot create waves for opportunists to ride and sacrifice people's most sacred values for their personal interests! It is on this basis that even the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) presents proof and evidence for the truth of his claim, offering two reliable witnesses whose testimony everyone accepts. With this introduction in mind, we now turn to the explanation and exegesis (*tafsīr*) of this noble verse.

Explanation and Exegesis (*Sharḥ wa Tafsīr*)

The Two Witnesses to Prophethood

"The faithless say, 'You have not been sent [by God].'"

"Say, 'God suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.'"

How Does God Bear Witness!

Question: How does God, who is hidden from sight and whom no one can see, bear witness to the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.)?

Answer: God bears witness to the truthfulness of the Prophet of Islam's (s.a.w.) mission through the miracles He grants to His Prophet. For it is impossible that the Wise God would grant not just one or two, but hundreds of miracles to a false prophet, as this would lead His servants astray, and the Wise God does not mislead His servants. Therefore, the very fact that God has granted numerous miracles to His Prophet serves as testimony to his prophethood.

Who is "He Who Possesses the Knowledge of the Book"?

ʿAllāma Ṭabrisī in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* presents three views on this matter:

1- The meaning of "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" refers to God Himself. In fact, this phrase is an explanatory conjunction (*ʿaṭf tafsīrī*) to "God", and both have the same meaning. Therefore, in this verse, only one witness is presented for the truthfulness of the Prophet of Islam's (s.a.w.) claim, and that is God .[3]

However, this view is rejected because the primary principle and rule in conjunction is multiplicity, meaning that the conjoined phrase should present something new, different from what it is conjoined to, and explanatory conjunction is contrary to this princi-

ple. This is a fact acknowledged by Arabic grammarians. Therefore, unless we have solid and reliable evidence that the above phrase is an explanatory conjunction, we must say that this phrase is presenting something new, rather than being considered a repetition of the previous phrase. For this reason, the above view is not acceptable.

2- The proponents of the second view, while rejecting the first view, believe that "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" refers to those People of the Book who converted to Islam, among whom was 'Abd Allāh ibn Salām .[4] He was a Jewish scholar, but a fair-minded one. He had read about the signs and characteristics of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) in the Torah, and when he recognized these signs of the final Prophet in Muhammad (s.a.w.) and understood that he was God's messenger, he believed in him. Had he remained in his former religion, he would have maintained a special status among the Jews and perhaps would have been granted material benefits, but when he recognized the truth, he overcame his worldly desires and converted to Islam. Therefore, he was one who possessed the "knowledge of the Book" (*'ilm al-kitāb*), meaning the signs of the Prophet in the Torah, and he bore witness to it. Thus, he is one of the two witnesses to the truthfulness of the Prophet's claim to messengership and prophethood. In other words, God and the previous divine books are the two witnesses testifying to the messengership of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

However, this view is also unacceptable because *Sūrat al-Ra'd* is among the chapters revealed in Mecca, while 'Abd Allāh ibn Salām converted to Islam in Medina. Therefore, at the time this verse was revealed, 'Abd Allāh ibn Salām had not yet become Muslim, so this verse could not be referring to him.

3- The third view, which is mentioned in many books of exegesis, history, hadith and the like, is that "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" refers to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) .[5]

Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, one of the Islamic scholars and companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who is accepted by Sunnis and viewed favorably by Shi'i scholars, says:

I came to the Prophet (s.a.w.) and asked, "Who is meant by 'he who had knowledge of the Book' ?[6]"

The Prophet replied, "That refers to the vizier of my brother Solomon son of David, Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā."

I then asked, "Who is meant by 'he who possesses the knowledge of the Book' in *Sūrat al-Raʿd*?" The Prophet replied, "That is my brother ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib .[7]"

This hadith has been narrated not only by Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, but also by ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, Salmān, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, Zayd ibn ʿAlī and others. Among those who have transmitted this narration are al-Qurṭubī ,[8] al-Suyūṭī ,[9] ʿAllāma Dashtakī Shīrāzī ,[10] al-Tirmidhī ,[11] and others. Therefore, the best explanation for "he who possesses the knowledge of the Book" is ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.).

How ʿAlī (a.s.) Was a Witness!

Question: Given the numerous narrations concerning the circumstances of the revelation of this noble verse, we accept that the verse refers to ʿAlī (a.s.). However, another question arises: How was he a witness and testimony to the prophethood and messengership of Muhammad (s.a.w.)?

Answer: To clarify the answer to this question, consider these two examples:

A- If someone enters a city where they know none of its inhabitants and goes to the mosque at prayer time to catch both the virtue of praying at the beginning of its prescribed time and the virtue of congregational prayer, how can they determine the righteousness of the prayer leader (*imām jamāʿa*) and follow him in prayer, given that they know no one? The jurists say: If a number of distinguished and meticulous people follow him in prayer, one can deduce the prayer leader's righteousness from their following; for instance, if hundreds of elderly scholars follow that prayer leader, in this case we deduce the prayer leader's righteousness through his followers.

B- If we observe that someone who is scientifically renowned and

respected by all people sits humbly before a teacher whom we do not know and studies under him, we deduce the teacher's greatness from the student's knowledge and learning. For example, if we were to see Shaykh Anṣārī or ʿAllāma Ḥillī studying under an unknown teacher, we would deduce the teacher's greatness through this student.

Considering these two examples, now attend to the answer to the aforementioned question:

When we study ʿAlī's personality, we find him to be the most excellent in all moral and human qualities:

ʿAlī, with his knowledge and learning, of which *Nahj al-Balāgha* is but one example - when one reflects and contemplates upon it, one cannot believe it emerged from a human mind. This is why it has been said of it: "Below the speech of the Creator and above the speech of creation."

ʿAlī, with his astounding and astonishing judgments, who resolved the most difficult legal cases in the best possible way and secured the rights of the oppressed from their oppressors.

ʿAlī, with his indescribable worship and servitude, who during prayer thought of none but God and attended to none but Him. So much so that a medical treatment that would be difficult for ʿAlī outside of prayer was successfully performed on him during prayer.

ʿAlī, with his exemplary valor and courage, who was never defeated in any battle and never turned his back on the enemy.

ʿAlī, with his strict justice, whom nothing and no one could divert from the path of justice, and ultimately this very justice led to his martyrdom.

Yes, when we consider ʿAlī (a.s.), who was the most excellent of people in these and other qualities, and observe that he believed in the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), dedicated his entire life to propagating his religion, and considered himself but a servant among Muhammad's servants, do we not deduce the truth of Muhammad's claim to prophethood from ʿAlī? Thus, ʿAlī is another witness and testimony to the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

In our belief, this witness and testimony to the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) is so significant that even if, hypotheti-

cally, the Prophet (s.a.w.) had no other proof for his prophethood except the testimony of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, it would have been sufficient!

A Comparison between Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.)

Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā was the minister of Solomon (a.s.), and his story appears in *Sūrat al-Naml*, which can be summarized as follows:

When the Queen of Sheba submitted to Solomon and set out towards this prophet of God, he addressed his officials, who were from among both jinn and humans, saying:

"O [members of the] elite! Which of you will bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?"

One of the jinn said: "An afreet from among the jinn said, 'I will bring it to you before you rise from your place. Indeed I have the power for it and am trustworthy.'"

It seems Solomon was not satisfied with this and wanted the task completed more quickly. Therefore, the one who possessed some knowledge of the Book (Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā), who could perform extraordinary feats through this knowledge, said: "The one who had knowledge of the Book said, 'I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.' So when he saw it set near him, he said, 'This is by the grace of my Lord, to test me if I will give thanks or be ungrateful. And whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful [should know that] my Lord is indeed all-sufficient, all-generous.'"[12]

Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā, through his knowledge of a portion of the Book and the Greatest Name (*ism al-aʿẓam*), became capable of performing such extraordinary and magnificent feats. Now, considering that ʿAlī (a.s.) possessed the complete knowledge of the Book and knew the entire Greatest Name, can his power be compared to that of Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā? From this discussion, we can build a bridge to understanding the cosmic authority (*wilāyat takwīniyya*) of the Pure Imams (a.s.); for the meaning of cosmic knowledge is not – God forbid – that

we believe ʿAlī (a.s.) was the creator of the heavens and earth, but rather that these great personalities, by God's permission, could exercise influence in the realm of existence, similar to what Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā did.

1. This phrase appears in Qurʾān, 2:111, 21:24, 27:64, and 28:75.

2. Question: How do Muslim people follow religious authorities (*marāji'*) in religious matters without asking for evidence, and why do followers commit to any statement or religious decree they issue, even when no evidence is presented?

3. *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, 3/301.

4. *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, 3/301.

5. *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, 3/301.

6. Qurʾān, 27:40.

7. *Yanābīʿ al-Mawadda*, 102 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/281).

8. *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 9/336 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/280).

9. *Al-Itqān*, 1/13 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/280).

10. *Rawḍat al-Aḥbāb*, 1/Events of the Ninth Year (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/280).

11. *Manāqib Murtaḍawī*, 49 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/280).

12. What was mentioned in the biography of Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā is a summary of verses 38, 39 and 40 of *Sūrat al-Naml*.

15

THEN A CALLER WILL ANNOUNCE...; AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM GOD AND HIS MESSENGER...

"The inhabitants of paradise will call out to the inmates of the Fire, 'We found what our Lord promised us to be true; did you find what your Lord promised you to be true?' 'Yes,' they will say. Then a caller will announce in their midst, 'May God's curse be on the wrongdoers!'"

(*Sūrat al-A'rāf*, verse 44)

"[This is] an announcement from God and His Messenger to all the people on the day of the greater hajj: that God and His Messenger repudiate the polytheists..."

(*Sūrat al-Tawba*, verse 3)

The Verse of the Caller and the Verse of the Proclamation

Verses 44 of *Sūrat al-A'rāf* and 3 of *Sūrat al-Tawba* are among other verses concerning the virtues of 'Alī (a.s.). In verse 44 of *Sūrat al-A'rāf*, God says:

"The inhabitants of paradise will call out to the inmates of the Fire, 'We found what our Lord promised us to be true; did you find what your Lord promised you to be true?' 'Yes,' they will say. Then a

caller will announce in their midst, 'May God's curse be on the wrongdoers!'"

And in verse 3 of *Sūrat al-Tawba*, we read:

"[This is] an announcement from God and His Messenger to all the people on the day of the greater hajj: that God and His Messenger repudiate the polytheists..."

Overview of the Discussion

The word "caller" (*mu'adhdhin*) appears only once in the Qur'an, concerning matters of the hereafter, in verse 44 of *Sūrat al-A'rāf*. The word "proclamation" (*adhān*) also appears once, in verse 3 of *Sūrat al-Tawba*, and both are connected to the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.).

"Proclamation" (*adhān*) in our time refers to the specific phrases recited to call to prayer, but in its linguistic meaning, it refers to any kind of announcement - sometimes an announcement with warning, sometimes a declaration of war, and sometimes an announcement of prayer time. In other words, "proclamation" (*adhān*) means delivering a message openly and publicly. Thus, proclamation is not exclusive to announcing prayer, but has a broader meaning.

Explanation and Exegesis of Verse 44 of *Sūrat al-A'rāf*

"The inhabitants of paradise will call out to the inmates of the Fire, 'We found what our Lord promised us to be true; did you find what your Lord promised you to be true?' 'Yes,' they will say. Then a caller will announce in their midst, 'May God's curse be on the wrongdoers!'"

This noble verse explains that the inhabitants of paradise speak to those in hell, saying to them: We found what God promised us to be true - did you also find what God promised you to be true? The inhabitants of hell reply: Yes. At this point, a caller (*mu'adhdhin*) announces among them that God's curse be upon the wrongdoers (*ẓālimīn*).

There are several noteworthy points in this noble verse:

1- The inhabitants of paradise speak with those in hell, showing that they can see and hear one another.

2- The inhabitants of paradise tell those in hell that God's promises are true and have been fulfilled.

3- Those in hell also acknowledge that God's promises were true.

4- Finally, a caller announces that God's curse is upon the wrongdoers.

Dialogue Between the Inhabitants of Paradise and Hell

To better understand the exegesis of the verse about the caller (*mu'adhdhin*), we must begin with several preceding verses:

"As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds—We task no soul except according to its capacity—they shall be the inhabitants of paradise, and they shall remain in it [forever]."

The phrase "We task no soul except according to its capacity" (*lā nukallifu nafsan illā wus'ahā*)—which appears as a parenthetical statement in the above verse—points to an important matter: that faith and righteous deeds are not the same for everyone, and equal faith and righteous deeds are not expected from all people. Rather, faith and righteous deeds are expected from each person according to their capacity and understanding. Without doubt, the faith of Ali (a.s.), Salmān, and Abū Dharr is not at the same level as that of other people, and what is expected from such distinguished individuals is different from what is expected from ordinary people. In short, whoever has faith and performs righteous deeds according to their capacity and ability will enter paradise and remain there eternally.

"We will remove whatever rancour there is in their breasts" (*wa naza'nā mā fī ṣudūrihim min ghill*)—After God describes the qualities of those who deserve to enter paradise, He discusses what will be done for them in paradise. The first thing that will be done is: "We will remove whatever is in their hearts of rancour and envy, so they may live together in harmony and sincerity." The term *ghill* refers to

the hidden flow of water beneath plants, and since envy and rancour are also hidden and concealed, they are called *ghill.*

Question: Do the inhabitants of paradise have rancour and envy that God removes upon their entry into paradise?

Answer: Some narrations indicate that certain mild degrees of envy and rancour exist in some of the inhabitants of paradise, which are not considered sins as long as they are not expressed, and do not contradict faith .[1] God removes even this weak degree of envy and rancour from the hearts of the inhabitants of paradise, so they may live together in complete peace.

"And streams will flow beneath them."

"And they will say, 'All praise belongs to God, who guided us to this. We would have never been guided had not God guided us. Our Lord's messengers had certainly brought the truth.'" After witnessing the blessings of paradise and divine favors and kindness, the inhabitants of paradise raise their hands in gratitude and say: "Praise belongs to God who guided us to this (abundance of blessings); and if God had not guided us, we would not have found the way. Indeed, the messengers of our Lord brought the truth." Yes, the inhabitants of paradise acknowledge that the legislative guidance of the prophets and saints and divine books, and the existential guidance arising from the attractions placed within human nature, caused them to enter paradise, and all of these are from the favors and kindness of God.

"And the call would be made to them: 'This is paradise, which you have been given to inherit because of what you used to do!'"

"And the inhabitants of paradise will call out to the inhabitants of the Fire, 'Indeed, we found what our Lord promised us to be true. Did you find what your Lord promised you to be true?'" - When the inhabitants of paradise settle in paradise, they look around searching for their friends and acquaintances, but they do not find some of them! They realize that these have become inhabitants of hell and are deprived of entering paradise. Therefore, they address the inhabitants of hell saying:

"What God promised us, based on our faith in which we chose

the right path in the world and were finally guided to paradise - we found all of God's promises to be true and there was no violation. Did you also find God's promises regarding your fate to be true? Were the punishments you were promised fulfilled?"

"They will say, 'Yes'" - The inhabitants of hell respond: "Yes, all the promises that were given were fulfilled. We have witnessed their realization with our own eyes."[2]

Question: Why do the inhabitants of paradise ask these questions of the inhabitants of hell?

Answer: It may be for greater assurance and deeper conviction; although the inhabitants of paradise had faith and belief in all the promises of the prophets, when they see their fulfillment, or hear it from the inhabitants of hell, their conviction becomes deeper.

Another possibility is that they pose this question to reproach and rebuke the inhabitants of hell, just as the inhabitants of hell used to reproach and rebuke the believers in the world and mock their faith and beliefs. Therefore, this question and answer represents a kind of reciprocation!

"Then a caller will announce among them that God's curse be upon the wrongdoers."

Who is the Caller?

Who is the caller (*mu'adhdhin*) mentioned in verse 44 of *Sūrat al-A'rāf*? Who is this divine messenger who has authority over paradise, hell, and the Day of Judgment? Who could this person be whose voice everyone hears and whose words bring the dialogue between the inhabitants of paradise and hell to an end?

Answer: There are numerous traditions in both Shi'i and Sunni sources that explain the caller (*mu'adhdhin*) as referring to Ali (a.s.). As an example, we will reference a few sources:

1- Al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, the Ḥanafī Sunni scholar, in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, narrates from Muḥammad al-Ḥanafiyya, who narrates from Ali (a.s.):

"I am that caller (*mu'adhdhin*)."

He also narrates a tradition from Ibn ʿAbbās who says: "Ali (a.s.) has names in the Qur'an that people are not familiar with, and one of these names is the caller (*mu'adhdhin*)." Although Ibn ʿAbbās did not attribute this tradition to the Prophet (s.a.w.), he must have heard it from him.[3]

2- Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr ibn Mardawayh has narrated in the book *al-Manāqib* that the caller (*mu'adhdhin*) is Ali (a.s.).[4]

3- Al-Ālūsī, one of the well-known Sunni exegetes, narrates in his exegesis *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* from Ibn ʿAbbās who said:

"The caller (*mu'adhdhin*) is Ali, may God honor his face."[5]

4- Shaykh Sulaymān al-Qundūzī, the author of *Yanābīʿ al-Mawadda*, also narrates in his book that the caller (*mu'adhdhin*) refers to Ali (a.s.).[6]

5- Mīr Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kashfī Tirmidhī has also narrated the same in *Manāqib*.[7]

Is Being the Caller an Honor?

Question: Some intellectuals who have fallen into the trap of prejudice, like Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, the author of the exegesis *al-Manār*, when they come across this noble verse and the traditions concerning it, say: "Even if we accept that the caller (*mu'adhdhin*) refers to Ali (a.s.), this is not considered an honor, because someone has to be the divine messenger and it makes no difference who that person is."

Answer: The response to this baseless statement is clear, because this caller (*mu'adhdhin*) is going to announce something by divine command, thus he is a divine messenger and bears the weighty and serious responsibility of being God's spokesperson. Therefore, the spokesperson must be an important person who can properly convey God's message and proclamation - especially a proclamation that will be made on the Day of Resurrection. And given the content of the proclamation, which includes God's curse upon the oppressors, the messenger himself must not have been tainted by oppression in this world, otherwise no one would curse themselves. Therefore, the

station of the caller (*mu'adhdhin*) on the Day of Resurrection is not an ordinary or normal station that anyone could undertake, and whoever attains this station has achieved a great virtue.

Why do some Sunni exegetes close their eyes to the realities and easily pass by Qur'anic truths, in order to preserve their prejudices, and sometimes even deny them?!

Commentary and Exegesis of Verse 3 of *Sūrat al-Tawba*

To clarify the exegesis of the "verse of proclamation" (*āyat adhān*), which is considered one of the verses about the virtues of Ali (a.s.) and is related to the "verse of the caller" (*āyat mu'adhdhin*), we need a brief explanation about the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba*:

In the eighth year after the migration, Mecca was conquered and idol worship was eliminated from the land of revelation, and everyone became Muslim. The loving approach of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) toward the polytheists of Mecca, combined with forgiveness, overlooking, and pardoning, caused people to widely welcome Islam and enter it in groups, accepting the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). This year with all its events came to an end, and the Prophet (s.a.w.) intended to perform the Farewell Pilgrimage in the ninth year, but considering the following matters, he did not find it appropriate to perform this great act of worship that year:

A- Some idol worshippers from various corners of the Arabian Peninsula would come to visit the House of God, and although the sacred Ka'ba had been cleansed of idols, they would circumambulate around that ancient house out of love for the idols, and moreover, they would chant slogans from the time of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) during their circumambulation!

B- The practice of circumambulation in a completely naked state had not yet been fully eradicated, and some idol worshippers would perform circumambulation in this manner. This was because they believed that the clothes worn during circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) had to be given as charity to the needy after completing the ritual. Therefore, if someone had only one set of clothes, or for any reason did not

want to give their clothes to the poor, they would remove their clothes before circumambulation and perform it naked, thus preserving their garments. Sometimes this practice was even carried out by female circumambulators! Now imagine the scene that would unfold when a woman appears naked in the Sacred Mosque and begins circumambulation, and how the spiritual and sacred atmosphere of the mosque would be transformed!

Considering these matters, the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) decided against performing the pilgrimage in the ninth year, until the initial verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba* were revealed. According to these verses, the Prophet was obligated to convey four points to the polytheists during the pilgrimage ceremonies of the tenth year of migration:

1- "No polytheist shall perform pilgrimage to the House"

The house that was built by the champion of the fight against idol worship and the history's idol-breaker is no place for idol worshippers and polytheists. A polytheist and idol worshipper should not circumambulate around the house of Divine Unity, unless they abandon their polytheism.

2- "No one shall circumambulate the House naked"

3- "And none shall enter the House except a believer" - In the past, entry into the Ka'ba was possible for the general public (unlike today where this blessing is available only to a select few individuals), and both Muslims and polytheists would enter the Ka'ba. However, after the proclamation of this message, no polytheist was permitted to enter the House of the Ka'ba.

4- "Whoever has a treaty, it shall last until its term, and whoever does not have a treaty shall have four months" - Those polytheists who had an open-ended peace treaty with the Prophet (s.a.w.) were given a four-month grace period to accept Islam. After four months, no treaty would remain between the Prophet and them. However, for those who had fixed-term treaties that had not yet expired, and who had not violated their agreements or aided the enemies of Islam, their treaties would remain valid until their completion .[8] The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) was obligated to communicate these matters to the polytheists during the pilgrimage of the tenth year of migra-

tion. For this task, he chose Abu Bakr to recite the initial verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba* to the polytheists during the pilgrimage. He set out toward Mecca, but shortly after, the trustworthy Gabriel descended upon the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and said:

"This mission must be carried out by yourself, or by a man who is like you; not by anyone else." After this message, the Prophet said to Ali:

"Dear Ali, go and take the initial verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba* from Abu Bakr and convey them to the polytheists during the pilgrimage ceremonies!"

Ali (a.s.) followed the Prophet's instructions, took the verses from Abu Bakr, and conveyed them to the polytheists during the days of pilgrimage .[9]

Ṭabarsī says regarding this matter:

"The exegetes and narrators of traditions unanimously agree that when *Sūrat Barā'a* was revealed, the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) first gave it to Abu Bakr, then took it back from him and handed it to Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib" .[10]

What *Majma' al-Bayān* has stated, and what we have explained in more detail, represents the common element in all traditions that have been narrated on this subject. The book *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq* alone has cited this from forty Sunni sources![11]

Differences in Details

Of course, these traditions differ in their details, of which we will mention one example:

Some traditions state that the Prophet (s.a.w.) had Ali mount his special camel, known as the "angry she-camel" (*nāqat ghaḍbā*), and Ali caught up with Abu Bakr at Masjid Shajara, which is near Medina and is considered one of the stations (*mīqāt*) for the pilgrimage of *tamattu'* and *'umra*. There, he explained the Prophet's command to Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr became deeply distressed and returned to Medina. Upon reaching the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), he asked:

"Has something been revealed about me?"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"No, but I have been commanded by God to do this. This task must be carried out either by myself or by someone from my household" (*lā, illā annī umirtu an uballighahu anā aw rajulun min ahl baytī*).[12]

In summary, these traditions indicate that the change in assignment was not initiated by the Prophet himself, but rather God had commanded him to do this. In any case, this mission was entrusted to Ali (a.s.), and through its completion, he eliminated the Prophet's concerns about the pilgrimage that were mentioned earlier. By purifying the Kaaba from the last remnants of polytheism and idol worship, the groundwork was laid for the Prophet's (s.a.w.) journey to Mecca for the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Ḥajjat al-Wadā'*).

Commentary and Explanation

A Serious Warning to the Polytheists

"[This is] a [declaration of] repudiation by God and His Messenger [addressed] to the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty" - The treaty between Muslims and those polytheists whose agreement had no specified duration is hereby annulled and considered void from this moment.

"Travel [unmolested] in the land for four months, but know that you cannot thwart God, and that God shall disgrace the faithless."

Question: Why did the Prophet break his treaties with the polytheists? Did this breach of treaty apply to all of the Prophet's agreements?

Answer: From the subsequent verses, we understand that the annulment of treaties only applied to agreements that either had no specific duration, or whose term had expired, as well as treaties whose term had not yet expired but whose polytheist signatories had violated by supporting the enemies of Islam and Muslims in the Battle of the Confederates (*Aḥzāb*) and similar occasions. However,

treaties whose term had not expired, and whose holders had neither violated them nor rushed to aid the enemies of Islam, remained valid and were respected by the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the Muslims until their completion, as mentioned in verse four of *Sūrat al-Tawba* where such treaties are exempted. This is because treaties and agreements in Islam, even when made with enemies, are considered sacred, and if circumstances require Muslims to have treaties with disbelievers (*kuffār*), they must respect them and act according to their terms.

"And a proclamation from God and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage (*Ḥajj al-Akbar*)"

Various explanations have been given regarding the "greater pilgrimage" (*Ḥajj al-Akbar*), but the best explanation is that it refers to the pilgrimage of enjoyment (*Ḥajj al-Tamattu'*), which includes the stations at Arafat (*'Arafāt*), the Sacred Monument (*Mash'ar al-Ḥarām*), Mina (*Minā*), the sacrifice (*Qurbānī*), the stoning of pillars (*Ramy al-Jamarāt*), and similar rites. The lesser pilgrimage (*Ḥajj al-Aṣghar*) refers to the lesser pilgrimage of enjoyment (*'Umrat al-Tamattu'*).[13] In any case, we must understand what this proclamation from God and His Messenger during the pilgrimage of enjoyment in the ninth year after migration entailed. Consider the continuation of the verse:

"That God and His Messenger repudiate the polytheists" This is why the treaties are annulled. Therefore, the polytheists and disbelievers have only two paths before them: The first path is to repent from their past, abandon polytheism (*shirk*), and turn to Islam and the religion of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), the other path is to continue to turn away from the truth.

"If you repent, that is better for you" For the polytheists and idol-worshippers whose treaties have been annulled, if they choose the path of repentance and accept Islam and join it, it is better for them. This is because their security in this world will be assured, and under the shade of acting according to Islamic laws, performing obligations, and avoiding prohibitions, their otherworldly felicity will be secured.

"But if you turn away, then know that you cannot thwart God, and give tidings to the faithless of a painful punishment" And if they do not repent and persist in their polytheistic beliefs and disobey the

truth, they cannot escape God's domain of power and render Him powerless! Moreover, a painful punishment and chastisement awaits them.

Is This Mission a Merit?

Question: According to what was discussed, Ali (a.s.) was appointed by the Prophet (s.a.w.) to deliver the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Tawba* to the polytheists of Mecca during the pilgrimage of enjoyment (*Ḥajj al-Tamattu'*). This mission, which was initially entrusted to Abu Bakr, was taken back from him. Does this mission count as a merit for Ali (a.s.)?

Answer: Some biased individuals, who seek to undermine and diminish these merits, have said: The reason for this change in mission was due to a custom and tradition prevalent among the Arabs. According to Arab custom, when someone sends a message to another person, either they must deliver it themselves or one of their family members and relatives must undertake this responsibility. For this reason, the Prophet (s.a.w.) dismissed Abu Bakr and sent Ali (a.s.) in his place. Therefore, the aforementioned mission does not count as a merit for Ali (a.s.)![14] However, in fairness, such a statement is far from the truth, because:

Firstly: Where did you discover this Arab custom? Where is such a matter mentioned? Can one deny such an important merit based on mere speculation?

Secondly: Even assuming such a custom existed among the Arabs, the change in the aforementioned mission has nothing to do with Arab custom, because according to some traditions, which were explained earlier, the Prophet (s.a.w.) did this by God's command and order.

Therefore, without doubt, this mission is considered a great merit for Ali (a.s.), and in light of this matter, if God were to choose someone as the immediate successor to the Prophet, He would undoubtedly select the superior person possessing greater merit. And

if people were to choose such a person, they too would select such an individual in accordance with the intellect.

The Connection Between the Verse "Call to Prayer" (*Adhān*) and "Caller to Prayer" (*Mu'adhdhin*)

The rewards and punishments of the hereafter are, in reality, reflections of human actions in this world. This becomes clear when we contemplate the relationship between the rewards and punishments of the hereafter and human actions in this world.

If a usurer, who commits the grave sin of usury, appears in the hereafter like an intoxicated person without self-control, unable to walk straight and steady, falling every few steps only to get up again and continue on their way, it is because they disrupted the economic balance of society in this world through this grave sin and caused economic and financial instability in society. Thus, the usurer's lack of balance in the hereafter is a reflection of the societal imbalance they caused in this world through committing the repugnant sin of usury. [15]

If oppression in the hereafter appears as darkness and the oppressor as someone in darkness who cannot find their way, it is because the oppressor made the world dark for the oppressed, such that they could not find their way anywhere. Thus, the darkness of the oppressor in the hereafter is the result and reflection of the darkness they created in this world for the oppressed, making their lives bleak.

If a believing person enters the scene of resurrection with a lamp of light and is guided towards divine pleasure and forgiveness in the shade of that lamp, it is because various people were guided to truth in this world through the light of their faith.

In summary, all "rewards" and "punishments" in the hereafter are reflections and products of our own actions in this world.

In light of this matter, if Ali (a.s.), according to what is mentioned in the third verse of *Sūrat al-Tawba*, is the "caller" (*mu'adhdhin*) of the Prophet (s.a.w.) in this world and delivers his message to the polythe-

ists in Mecca, then he is also the "caller" (*mu'adhdhin*) in the hereafter and delivers God's message to the inhabitants of hell, declaring them subject to divine curse due to the oppression they committed.

If Ali is the final arbiter (*faṣl al-khiṭāb*) of all discourse exchanged between the inhabitants of paradise and hell in the hereafter, it is because he was also the final arbiter in this world and delivered the final word to the polytheists and idol worshippers. Is this an insignificant merit? Does any other person, whether among Muslims or followers of other divine religions, possess such merit?

The Wisdom Behind Changing the Mission of Conveying the Verses of *Sūrat al-Barā'a*

Question: According to what was previously mentioned, the Prophet (s.a.w.), by consensus of all exegetes (*mufassirīn*), both Shi'i and Sunni, initially appointed Abu Bakr to convey the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Barā'a*, then dismissed him and appointed Ali (a.s.) for this task. Did the Prophet (s.a.w.) regret his decision and therefore make this change? Or were both actions according to God's command - both the appointment and dismissal of Abu Bakr, and the assignment of this mission to Ali (a.s.)? In short, what was the wisdom behind this change of mission?

Answer: The answer to this question is clear; the Prophet (s.a.w.) performed both actions consciously, and his aim was to introduce the person who was most excellent and superior, and to guide people's minds from the one they thought was superior to the one who was truly and actually superior. For this reason, he initially gave this mission to Abu Bakr and then dismissed him, appointing Ali (a.s.) for this task, in order to make people understand that Ali (a.s.) was superior and more worthy than Abu Bakr and all other Muslims.

This was not the first time that the Prophet (s.a.w.) had done such a thing; rather, he had previously done similar actions many times - to clarify the aforementioned purpose.

For example, during the Battle of Khaybar, one day the Prophet (s.a.w.) gave the banner to Abu Bakr to conquer the fortress of Khay-

bar. He tried his utmost until evening but was unable to conquer the strong fortress of Khaybar. The next day, he gave the banner to Umar, who also failed to conquer the fortress of Khaybar. On the third night, he declared:

"Tomorrow I shall give the banner to a man who loves God and His Messenger, and God and His Messenger love him; one who attacks repeatedly and never flees, through whose hands God will grant victory."

The companions, who understood the Prophet's intention, said: "If you mean Ali, he is currently suffering severely from an eye ailment."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Bring Ali here." When Ali came to the Prophet, he applied some of his saliva to Ali's eyes, and by God's permission, Ali's eyes were healed! The next day, the Prophet (s.a.w.) gave the banner to him, and he conquered the fortress of Khaybar.[16]

Why did the Prophet (s.a.w.) first give the banner to two other companions and then to Ali?

The answer to this question is clear: he wanted to demonstrate practically the excellence and superiority of Ali (a.s.).

A similar incident occurred during the Battle of the Confederates (*Aḥzāb*). When ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wudd, that renowned champion of the polytheists and idol-worshippers, crossed the trench and stood before the Muslims challenging them to combat, no one except Ali declared his readiness.

The Prophet said: "Stay in your places!"

For the second time, ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wudd called for a challenger, and again no one but Ali rose.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Stay seated!"

On the third occasion, ʿAmr spoke rudely: "I have grown weary from calling for challengers and my voice is hoarse. Is there no one among you Muslims eager for Paradise, so that I might send him there!" Again, no one but Ali stood up!

This time, the Prophet (s.a.w.) permitted Ali to enter the battlefield, and to everyone's amazement and astonishment, Ali emerged victorious over ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wudd.[17] Here too, the Prophet (s.a.w.)

acted in this way to demonstrate Ali's (a.s.) excellence and superiority, practically reinforcing Ali's (a.s.) social position and status.

1. *Al-Manār*, 8/421 (cited from *Tafsīr Namūna*, 6/175).

2. The Almighty God has referred to this blessing in *Sūrat al-Baqara*, verses 25 and 226, *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, verses 15, 136, 195 and 198, *Sūrat al-Nisā'*, verses 13, 57 and 122, *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, verses 12, 85 and 119, and other verses of the Holy Qur'ān. In summary, this blessing is mentioned in approximately 40 verses.

3. Cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/394.

4. Cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/393.

5. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 8/107 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/393).

6. *Yanābī' al-Mawadda*, 101 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/393).

7. *Manāqib Murtaḍawī*, 60 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/393).

8. *Tafsīr Namūna*, 7/289.

9. *Tafsīr Namūna*, 7/275.

10. *Majma' al-Bayān*, 3/3.

11. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/427 onwards.

12. *Khaṣā'iṣ Nasā'ī*, p. 28 (as quoted in *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 7/276).

13. "The Day of 'Arafa" and "The Day of 'Īd al-Qurbān" are among other interpretations of "the greater pilgrimage" (*ḥajj al-akbar*); for more information refer to *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2/5 and *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, 2/244-5.

14. *Al-Kashshāf*, 2/244.

15. For detailed discussions related to usury (*ribā*), please refer to the book *Ribā wa Bānkdārī-yi Islāmī*.

16. For the complete account of this story, refer to *Furūgh-i Abadiyyat*, 2/248 onwards.

17. *Furūgh-i Abadiyyat*, 2/135 onwards.

16

HE WHO BRINGS THE TRUTH AND HE WHO CONFIRMS IT—IT IS THEY WHO ARE THE GODWARY

"So who is a greater wrongdoer than him who attributes a falsehood to God, and denies the truth when it reaches him? Is not the [final] abode of the faithless in hell? He who brings the truth and he who confirms it—it is they who are the Godwary. They will have whatever they wish near their Lord. That is the reward of the virtuous."

(*Sūrat al-Zumar*, verses 32-34)

Overview of the Discussion

In the verses of *Sūrat al-Zumar*, two groups are mentioned: the most unjust people and the most truthful people. Then, the punishment of the most unjust and the reward of the most truthful are discussed.

The important point, which we must clarify in future discussions, is who is the most truthful person, referred to as the "virtuous one" (*muḥsin*)? The answer to this question will be presented in detail.

Explanation and Exegesis

The Most Unjust People!

"So who is a greater wrongdoer than him who attributes a falsehood to God and denies the truth when it reaches him?"

Without doubt, all lies are reprehensible and considered among the major sins, but it is very clear that lying about God and the great prophets (a.s.) is extremely reprehensible and dangerous, and sometimes leads to terrible consequences and unfortunate results.

Question: What lies did the idol-worshippers attribute to God and the Prophet (s.a.w.)?

Answer: Some of their false attributions were as follows:

a- They considered angels to be God's daughters.

b- Some of them believed that God was pleased with their idol worship and that idols were intermediaries between them and God, considered as their intercessors before God!

c- Some polytheists attributed children to God and considered Jesus to be the son of God.

d- Sometimes they would declare certain things lawful and others unlawful, falsely attributing these rulings to God.

These matters and others like them were lies they attributed to God, and when confronted with the divine prophets and their struggle against these falsehoods—prophets who were sent for humanity's salvation—they would deny and reject their prophethood and message.

Truly these people are considered the most unjust of humans. They committed injustice not only against themselves but also against people and the luminous words of divine scriptures.

Their injustice against themselves took the form of closing the path of happiness, success, and salvation through these denials, and with their own hands, they led themselves to misguidance and hellfire!

As for their injustice against people, it was because they caused

others to go astray. Not only did they close the path of happiness for themselves, but they also drove others into the valley of wretchedness and misguidance. They are like innovators (*mubtadi'ūn*) whose great and unforgivable sin of innovation continues to keep their heavy and dark record of sins open for thousands of years, sometimes until the Day of Judgment, such that even if they repent, there is no way to return or make amends.

Their injustice against divine verses can also be conceived, as mentioned explicitly in verse 103 of *Sūrat al-A'rāf*. In this noble verse, God says:

"Then after them We sent Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his elite, but they wronged them. So observe how was the fate of the agents of corruption!"

Then after them [the previous prophets] We sent Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his elite, but they wronged them [by not accepting them]. So observe how was the fate of the agents of corruption!

According to this explicit verse, the rejection and denial of divine signs—which are the heavenly books and the miracles of the prophets—is considered a form of injustice against divine signs. This is because when we prevent something that has the capacity to guide people from fulfilling its purpose, we have wronged it, in addition to wronging those people. Therefore, those who misrepresent Islam, or make Islam appear bad through their ugly actions, or interpret Islamic laws according to their personal opinion, all of these have done injustice to Islam.

In summary, the most unjust person is one who denies God and His Messenger, and such a person faces severe punishment, which is mentioned in the continuation of the verse:

"Is not the [final] abode of the faithless in hell?"—The fate of such unjust people, who wrong themselves, other people, and divine signs, is hell; hell which is the abode of disbelievers (*kāfirīn*). The fact that here it does not explicitly state the abode of the most unjust individuals, but rather presents it in the form of a question, is itself a

noteworthy point deserving attention, as such an abode and punishment for such beings is predictable by everyone!

"He who brings the truth and he who confirms it—it is they who are the Godwary"—As for the second group, who stand in opposition to the first group, meaning those who bring truth and righteousness and those who confirm their message, these are the most Godwary people. Although the word "most Godwary" (*atqā*) is not used here, we can claim that these two groups are the most Godwary people for two reasons: First, by way of contrast, meaning that when those who deny God and His Messenger are the most unjust people, surely those who confirm God and His Messenger must be the most Godwary people. Second, the phrase "they who are the Godwary" (*hum al-muttaqūn*) is a restrictive statement, meaning that only these people are truly Godwary, the real Godwary ones are these people. Therefore, the effects and blessings of Godwariness and the rewards and promises mentioned in the Qur'an for the Godwary are specific to such people. Those who are referred to in this noble verse, in addition to what is given to the general Godwary people, have special rewards that are explained in the next verse:

"They will have whatever they wish near their Lord. That is the reward of the virtuous"—The ranks and stations of the most Godwary people are so high that unlimited blessings are placed at their disposal and whatever they wish is given to them, and this is the reward of the virtuous—a reward beyond which nothing can be imagined.

Who is "The Bearer of Truth" and "The One Who Confirms It"?

Question: Who is meant by the phrase "he who brings the truth" and the phrase "he who confirms it"?

Answer: The first phrase refers to the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the second phrase refers to Ali (a.s.). Although the second phrase may include all believers who confirmed the message of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), without doubt Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) stands at their head.

This matter has been mentioned in numerous books of both Shi'i and Sunni scholars, of which we will point to several examples:

1- Ibn al-Maghāzilī, a very well-known Sunni scholar, in his famous book *Manāqib* narrates from the renowned exegete Mujāhid:

"'He who brings the truth' is the Messenger of God and 'he who confirms it' is Ali"[1]

The one who brought the word of truth was the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the one who confirmed it was Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.).

2- Ibn 'Asākir has also narrated this matter.[2]

3- 'Allāma Ganjī in *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib* is also among the scholars who have narrated this hadith.[3]

4- Al-Qurṭubī has also explicitly stated this matter in his exegesis. [4]

5- Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī has also chosen this exegesis.[5]

6- Al-Suyūṭī in the exegesis *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* also holds this view. [6]

7- Al-Tirmidhī, author of *Manāqib Murtaḍawī*, also believes in this matter.[7]

8- Al-Ālūsī in the exegesis *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* is also among the numerous Sunni scholars who accepted this exegesis.[8]

Fakhr al-Rāzī, the Only Opponent!

Despite all exegetes and narrators explaining this verse in reference to the Prophet (s.a.w.) and Ali (a.s.), Fakhr al-Rāzī has raised the banner of opposition and says:

"The second phrase refers to Abu Bakr, because he was titled al-Ṣiddīq!"

Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Tustarī gives an appropriate response to this claim, saying:

"Before Fakhr al-Rāzī, this matter was not mentioned in any book, and since Fakhr al-Rāzī was not among the companions of the Prophet, on what basis has he made this claim?"

Therefore, the invalidity of this statement needs no explanation or commentary.[9]

. . .

1. *Manāqib*, as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/177.

2. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/177.

3. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, 109 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/177).

4. *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 15/256 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/178).

5. *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 7/428 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/178).

6. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 5/328 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/178).

7. *Manāqib Murtaḍawī*, 51 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/178).

8. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 30/3 (cited from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/178).

9. Additionally, there are various narrations in both general and specific sources that exclusively attribute the two qualities of "truthful" (*ṣiddīq*) and "distinguisher" (*fārūq*) among all Muslims to Ali (a.s.). According to these narrations, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Every nation has a truthful one and a distinguisher, and the truthful one and distinguisher of this nation is Ali ibn Abi Talib." These narrations appear in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 38/112, 212, 213, 216 and other volumes. Interestingly, the content of the above narration, cited from dozens of Sunni books, also appears in *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/313 onwards.

17

GOD IS PLEASED WITH THEM AND THEY ARE PLEASED WITH HIM

"The early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them in virtue—God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them forever. That is the great success."

(*Sūrat al-Tawba*, verse 100)

Overview of the Discussion

Although this noble verse speaks of three groups and gives lofty tidings to the forerunners of all three groups, among the forerunners there is one who stands in the first rank and is the very first of the forerunners. According to numerous narrations that will follow, that first individual and the vanguard of all forerunners is none other than Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.)!

Explanation and Exegesis

The Forerunners of Islam

"The early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them in virtue" - This noble verse speaks of three groups:

First group: The "Emigrants" (*Muhājirīn*) - They were Muslims who were under severe pressure from the enemy in Mecca, and when the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) migrated to Medina, they followed him. To escape from the pressures, harassment, and persecution of the polytheists, and to strengthen the nascent religion of Islam, they abandoned their homes, properties, lands, relatives, kinsmen, tribe, and in short, all their possessions, and migrated to Medina empty-handed.

Many dangers threatened the Emigrants: the danger from the polytheists of Mecca who sought to take revenge and destroy them; the danger of starvation, since they had left everything behind in Mecca.

The dangers of unemployment, lack of suitable work, the pain of exile and loneliness, separation from relatives and kinsmen and homeland, and similar dangers. But these true Muslims accepted all these dangers and migrated to Medina. The economic situation of some of them was so dire that a platform was designated for them next to the Prophet's Mosque, where they would spend their days and nights! This group later became known as the "People of the Platform" (*Aṣḥāb al-Ṣuffa*). These impoverished Muslims spent their time near the Prophet's Mosque, ready for any kind of service and sacrifice for Islam.

Second group: The "Helpers" (*Anṣār*) - These were Muslims who had embraced Islam in Medina and had invited the Prophet to migrate there, declaring their readiness for any kind of cooperation with the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the Muslims. They welcomed the Emigrants with open arms, offering their homes and livelihoods to them and helping them as if they were their own brothers.

These Helpers also made many sacrifices, even though some of them barely had enough means to sustain their own simple lives.

Third group: The "Followers" (*Tābi'īn*) - These are the Muslims who were born after the Emigrants and Helpers and followed in their footsteps, joining these two groups.[1] According to this exegesis, the Followers include all Muslims from the second generation until the Day of Resurrection, in every era and place. This means that if Muslims of our own time continue the path of supporting fellow Muslims and migrating towards God's pleasure, they are included in the term "Followers" (*Tābi'īn*) mentioned in this verse. As discussed in previous sections, migration is not limited to the early Muslims, but is possible in every era, because migration means moving from sins toward obedience, from impurities toward purification, and from darkness toward light.

Question: What is the meaning of the term "with virtue" (*bi-iḥsān*) that appears in describing the Followers?

Answer: There are two possible explanations for this term:

First, following the Emigrants and Helpers should not be merely in words, but should also be demonstrated through actions by continuing their path of support and migration. In other words, they should follow and emulate the Emigrants and Helpers properly and correctly.

The second possibility is that one should follow the Emigrants and Helpers in their good deeds, not in all their actions and behaviors. This is because among these noble individuals, there were some who acted contrary to the way of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and Islamic teachings.

Unlike what the Sunnis believe - that all companions of the Prophet are pure and infallible[2] - we do not believe in the infallibility of all of them, and the above noble verse can serve as good evidence for this Shi'i belief. Therefore, the Followers should emulate and follow the Emigrants and Helpers in their good and virtuous deeds, not in all their actions and words, especially when these deviate from the path of truth!

"God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He

has prepared for them gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them forever. That is the great success."

After naming these three groups of early pioneers and speaking of them with reverence, God describes their spiritual and material rewards.

Their spiritual rewards are: "God's pleasure with them, and their pleasure with God." God's pleasure with them is clear and evident, as they pursued the path of supporting Islam and Muslims and migration, which brought about God's pleasure. As for their pleasure with God, it means that in the intermediate realm (*barzakh*) and on the Day of Resurrection, God will grant them whatever they desire, and they will be pleased with their Lord for this reason.

As for their material rewards, gardens of paradise have been prepared for them from now on, which have two characteristics: first, that water flows continuously beneath their trees, and second, that the inhabitants of paradise will not worry about losing these gardens after settling in them, for these gardens will be at their disposal forever and they will dwell in them eternally. Without doubt, God's pleasure with them, their pleasure with God, and having such paradisiacal gardens for these three groups constitutes a great victory, and no victory greater than this can be imagined.

The First Muslim Man

Question: From verse 100 of *Sūrat al-Tawba*, it was understood that there were three groups of pioneers, but now the question arises: who was the foremost among the pioneers? Who was the first man among the Muslims to answer the call of the Prophet of Islam?

Answer: There are numerous narrations regarding this verse that identify the first Muslim. According to these narrations, the first man to embrace Islam was Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), and the first woman was Khadija (a.s.).

This matter is considered self-evident among all Islamic scholars, both Shi'i and Sunni. Several Sunni scholars have claimed consensus on this matter. Consider the statements of these scholars:

1- Ibn Abd al-Barr, a well-known Sunni scholar, says:

"They agree that Khadija was the first to believe in God and His Messenger and affirm what he brought, and then Ali after her"[3]

2- Abu Ja'far Iskafi al-Mu'tazili, the teacher of Ibn Abi l-Hadid al-Mu'tazili, who died in 240, says regarding the first Muslim: "All people have narrated Ali ibn Abi Talib's pride in being the first to embrace Islam"[4]

3- Hakim al-Naysaburi says in *al-Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, which is of equal standing with *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*:

"I do not know of any disagreement among historians that Ali ibn Abi Talib was the first of them to embrace Islam; they only differed regarding whether he had reached maturity"[5]

I have not observed any disagreement among historians regarding Ali ibn Abi Talib being the first Muslim man. However, there are differences of opinion concerning whether he had reached maturity at the time of accepting Islam.

Beyond the above statements, which contained claims of consensus regarding Ali's (a.s.) precedence in accepting Islam, the late Allama Amini has cited 25 narrations from the Infallibles (a.s.) and the views of 66 prominent Islamic figures and distinguished poets on this matter! And some Shi'i scholars have cited one hundred hadith from Sunni sources on this topic, which is an extraordinary number![6] Indeed, this matter stands at a high level of reliability and authenticity, and the Shi'a take pride in this. We Shi'is must be grateful for the great blessing of following the Shi'i school and be thankful to our fathers, mothers, and scholars who showed us this path. Consider these examples from the mentioned narrations:

1- Anas, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) personal servant, narrates:

"The Prophet received revelation on Monday, and Ali accepted Islam on Tuesday." (And in another narration) "The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) was sent on Monday, and Ali prayed on Tuesday"[7]

Question: Did Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) ever prostrate before an idol or believe in anything other than Divine Unity?

Answer: According to historical testimony, Ali ibn Abi Talib never prostrated before an idol even for a moment, nor did he choose any

religion other than that of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) .[8] Therefore, the meaning of the above statements is that he declared and announced his Islam one day after the Prophet's mission began, which does not contradict the possibility that he had already accepted Islam in his heart before that.

2- Salman al-Farsi, the well-known companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.), says regarding the first Muslim:

"The first of this community to join its Prophet at the Pool [in Paradise] is the first of them to accept Islam, Ali ibn Abi Talib" [9]

As mentioned before, the rewards of the hereafter reflect one's deeds in this world. Since Ali (a.s.) was the first Muslim, he will be the first person to join the Prophet (s.a.w.) at the Pool of Kawthar.

3- The second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, also acknowledges this fact.

Abdullah ibn Abbas, the well-known companion of the Prophet and special student of Ali (a.s.), says:

"I was with Umar along with some other Muslims, and a discussion arose about who was the first Muslim. Umar narrated a hadith about this, which I heard with my own ears:

"As for Ali, I heard the Messenger of God say three qualities about him. I would have loved to possess even one of them, and that would have been dearer to me than everything under the sun. I was with Abu Ubayda and a group of his companions when the Prophet (s.a.w.) placed his hand on Ali's shoulder and said: 'You are the first of the believers in faith (*īmān*), and the first of the Muslims in submission (*islām*), and you are to me as Aaron was to Moses'" [10]

Question: Is the phrase "first Muslim" simply another way of saying "first believer," or does it have a different meaning?

Answer: Faith (*īmān*) relates to one's inner beliefs, while submission (*islām*) refers to the verbal declaration of those beliefs. Therefore, Ali (a.s.) was both the first person to believe in the Prophet in his heart and the first person to declare and announce his inner faith.

The Value of Faith Before Puberty!

Question: Had Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) reached puberty when he embraced Islam? If he had not reached the age of puberty at that time, can his faith be considered a virtue such that he could be regarded as the first Muslim?

Answer: To address this question, it is necessary to consider four points:

First point: If someone has not reached puberty but is an intelligent and astute child, rational, alert, and discerning (*mumayyiz*), and can clearly distinguish between good and evil, in our view, such a person's Islam and faith are accepted. Not only is their faith accepted, but according to what our jurists have said: the acts of worship of such an adolescent are also valid; their prayer, fasting, pilgrimage (*hajj*), minor pilgrimage (*'umra*), and other acts of worship that they perform while observing all the conditions are valid.

In the words of Islamic jurists, such a person's acts of worship are legally binding (*shar'ī*), not merely practice![11] Therefore, when the acts of worship of such a pre-pubescent adolescent are valid and legally binding, their faith is accepted a fortiori. The conclusion is that faith before puberty is accepted from a discerning adolescent.

Furthermore, we believe that such adolescents are accountable for certain sins, and one cannot exempt them from the consequences of all sins simply because they have not reached the age of religious obligation (*taklīf*), thereby giving them a green light! For this reason, if a discerning child who has not yet reached puberty and knows that killing an innocent person is wrong kills an innocent person, they are liable for that person's blood and are accountable before God!

The conclusion is that pre-pubescent individuals, if they are rational, alert, and discerning, their faith is accepted. Therefore, puberty is not a condition for accepting Islam and faith.

Second point: A number of divine prophets attained the station of prophethood during childhood. How is it that puberty is not a condition for prophethood - which is incomparable to accepting faith - yet

it would be a condition for accepting Islam?! Consider these two examples of the bestowal of prophethood during childhood:

1- John (a.s.) attained prophethood during childhood; God states in verse 12 of *Sūrat Maryam* regarding this:

"O John! Hold on with power to the Book! And We gave him judgement while still a child."

2- Jesus also attained prophethood during childhood; God states in *Sūrat Maryam*, verse 30, in the words of Jesus while he was in the cradle:

"Indeed I am a servant of God! He has given me the Book and made me a prophet."

He says "Indeed I am a servant of God" to ensure that later he would not be called the son of God. And his saying "made me" (*ja'alanī*) rather than "will make me" (*yaj'alunī*) indicates that he was a prophet of God from childhood.

This has also been reported about some other prophets .[12]

In summary, when no specific age is required for prophethood, which is a great and lofty station, then by greater reason (*bi-ṭarīq awlā*) the age of puberty should not be a condition for accepting faith and embracing Islam.

Third point: Three years after his prophetic mission began, the Prophet (s.a.w.) was commanded to invite his relatives and kinsmen and present Islam to them. That is, after three years of secret and hidden invitation[13] to Islam of the few individuals who were ready to accept it, the Prophet (s.a.w.) was commanded to openly and publicly proclaim and promote the monotheistic religion of Islam. The Prophet (s.a.w.) assigned Ali to prepare for this gathering and instructed him to prepare suitable food with the help of other Muslims and invite the Prophet's relatives and kinsmen to this assembly.

The guests arrived and the meal was served. After the meal, the Prophet (s.a.w.) stood up and shared the new religion with his relatives and kinsmen, and declared himself to be God's prophet. Then he said: "Whoever accepts my invitation will be my successor, minister and caliph!" The Prophet repeated his words three times,

but no one except Ali (a.s.) gave a positive response to the Prophet (s.a.w.). The Prophet, addressing his relatives and kinsmen regarding the young Ali, said: "Indeed this is my brother, my successor, and my caliph over you, so listen to him and obey him".[14]

According to those who believe that Ali (a.s.) was ten years old when he accepted Islam at the beginning of the prophetic mission, and therefore his faith had little value, he would have been 13 years old at the time of the above incident. If Ali's faith before puberty had no value, then why did the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) use such beautiful words about him as his successor after himself?! Whoever doubts this virtue of Ali has in fact doubted the station and words of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.)! And if you say that these words were appropriate for him at the age of thirteen and before puberty, then you must accept that his faith at the age of ten was also valid and valuable.

Fourth point: Beyond all these discussions, it is not definitively certain that Ali (a.s.) was not of age at the time of the Prophet's mission and his acceptance of Islam. Rather, there is disagreement among Islamic scholars and experts on this matter. As the author of *al-Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* pointed out in previous discussions. Consider some of the views of Muslim scholars on this matter:

a.Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr writes in *al-Istīʿāb*, volume 2, page 471:

"The first to accept Islam after Khadīja was Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, and he was fifteen or sixteen years old"[15]

a.The author of *Usd al-Ghāba fī Maʿrifat al-Ṣaḥāba* in volume 4, page 17, has reported three different views on this matter, according to one of which some believe that his age at that time was fifteen years.

b.The late ʿAllāma Majlisī has also addressed this issue and reported seven different opinions about it.[16]

Therefore, Ali (a.s.) being under age at the time of his acceptance of Islam is not a definitive certainty. Rather, Islamic scholars differ in their views on this matter.

In summary, according to numerous and widely transmitted (*mutawātir*) narrations, Ali (a.s.) was the first man to embrace Islam and hasten to aid the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), and even if we accept

that he was under age at that time, nothing diminishes from this great virtue.

"First of the Believers" - A Great Distinction!

Some might imagine that being the "first of the believers" (*awwal al-mu'minīn*) is not considered a distinction, and that there is no difference between one who believes before all others and those who join the ranks of the believers after him. However, in fairness, there is a great difference between these two.

To clarify this point, let us review the story of "Pharaoh's magicians":

Pharaoh ordered all magicians from across Egypt to gather to defeat Moses (a.s.) and to hasten to confront him on the appointed day. He made many promises to them, the most important of which was that "they would become among those closest to Pharaoh's court."[17]

Pharaoh prepared everything for the appointed day and was confident that he would be victorious. When the appointed day arrived, first the Pharaonic magicians cast their implements of magic and frightened the people with their sorcery and illusions, plunging them into great amazement!

Then Moses (a.s.), by God's command, cast his staff toward the magic of Pharaoh's magicians. Suddenly, the staff transformed into a great serpent and swallowed all the magicians' implements! When the magicians realized that this act of Moses was unlike the work of magicians and that he was supported by God, they all fell involuntarily into prostration and said:

"We have believed in the Lord of all the worlds"[18]

The faith of Pharaoh's magicians in Moses (a.s.) - who had gathered to defeat him - was very impactful and led to remarkable progress in Moses's religion, dealing a devastating blow to Pharaoh and his followers. For when people saw that those who were themselves practitioners of magic and could well distinguish between a "miracle" (*mu'jiza*) and "sorcery" (*siḥr*) had believed in Moses as God's

prophet, they too began following the magicians in joining Moses. When Pharaoh witnessed this astonishing scene, he began threatening and intimidating yesterday's magicians who had become today's Muslims and believers.

Pharaoh threatened them with the severest tortures, saying:

"Do you profess faith in Him before I permit you? He is indeed your chief who has taught you magic! Soon you will surely know! Surely I will cut off your hands and feet from opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you all."[19]

But the light of faith had made all these torments and punishments easy for them to bear. Therefore, they declared their readiness for any kind of torture and punishment, saying:

"Indeed we hope our Lord will forgive us our iniquities for being the first to believe."[20]

From these verses, we understand that being the "first of the believers" (*awwal al-mu'minīn*) is a great distinction. It is such that it becomes an atonement for all previous sins, and the reason for this is clear, because not everyone has the courage to become the first of the believers; the dangers, fears, losses and other matters usually fall upon those who stand in the front ranks of the believers, and for this reason, being the first of the believers carries an important reward.

Ali (a.s.), who is the first of the believers (*awwal al-mu'minīn*) among Muslims, holds a special and unique distinction. His courage and bravery led him, upon hearing the Prophet's call and recognizing it as God's message, and upon listening to the verses of the Qur'an, to not hesitate but immediately believe as the first of the believers.

His Shi'i followers too must be pioneers in confronting corruption and impurity, and even if they have no companions or supporters, they should fight against corruption and impurity alone and be the first to command good and forbid evil (*āmirīn bi-l-ma'rūf wa nāhīn 'an al-munkar*). When dear youth participate in celebrations and festivities, if they observe that the gathering is tainted with sin and its participants are unwilling to cease their sinful behavior, they must not conform to the crowd, for in such cases conformity is disgrace. Rather, they should leave the sinful gath-

ering and accept all blame and criticism for God's sake with heart and soul.

The followers and Shi'is of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) must not fear solitude while traversing Ali's path, for he said:

"Do not feel lonely on the path of guidance due to the few who travel it."[21]

In summary, the "first of the believers" (*awwal al-mu'minīn*) must possess greater courage, deeper knowledge, and the power to break the chains of ancestral imitation - all of which were united in Ali (a.s.).

Pharaoh's magicians, by believing in Moses and joining the ranks of his first believers, not only freed themselves from the darkness of disbelief and polytheism but also joined the ranks of martyrs. Indeed, they were among Pharaoh's supporters in the morning and among the martyrs by nightfall ,[22] for Pharaoh carried out his threat and martyred them all in a tragic manner.

It is also worth noting that the faith of subsequent believers is indebted to the faith of the first of the believers (*awwal al-mu'minīn*). For this reason, a significant portion of Moses' companions and believers embraced the religion of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) due to the faith and martyrdom of these magicians, and this is one of the many effects of the blood of martyrs.

Message of the Verse

Recognizing Virtues: A Prelude to Action!

In discussing the virtues of Ali (a.s.) or other members of the Household (a.s.), one should not be content with merely speaking about and hearing them. Rather, after recognizing these virtues, one should place them like a bright lamp before one's life path and, by implementing them in word and deed, become a true Shi'i of these noble figures. Therefore, if in these verses Ali is praised because he is both "truthful" (*ṣādiq*) and one who "confirms" (*muṣaddiq*) the truth, his

followers must also be the same and not allow their personal preferences and inclinations to interfere with their affirmation of truth and honest speech. Interestingly, even if Satan speaks the truth, one must listen and confirm it, just as God commanded Noah to listen to Satan's good words, despite him being Satan .[23] Here, we draw the attention of "truthful" and "confirming" Shi'is to two hadith about truthfulness:

1- The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said:

"Do not look at the abundance of their prayers, fasting, pilgrimages, good deeds, and their nighttime devotions, but look at their truthfulness in speech and fulfillment of trust"[24]

In summary, according to this prophetic hadith, the criterion for evaluating people is truthfulness and fulfillment of trust.

2- Ali (a.s.) said:

"Faith means preferring truthfulness when it harms you over falsehood when it benefits you"[25]

According to this hadith, faith requires truthfulness and honesty, and a believer cannot be a liar.

We ask God to grant us success in following all the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.), especially truthfulness, honesty, and confirmation of truth and reality.

1. Of course, the term "followers" (*tābi'īn*) has a different and more limited meaning among Sunni hadith scholars, referring to those who did not meet the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) but benefited from the knowledge of his companions. It does not refer to every Muslim who follows the path of the emigrants and helpers, even if they were not their contemporaries.

2. During my recent trip to Mecca (1380 Solar Hijri/1422 Lunar Hijri, Sha'bān), at the suggestion of several Sunni scholars and intellectuals of Mecca, we had some discussions. Among the topics discussed in those sessions was the issue of the justice of the Prophet's companions. I told them: You believe that all of the Prophet's companions were just and free from sin, while in the Battle

of Jamal, whose instigators were from among the Prophet's companions, more than seventeen thousand Muslims were killed. Who is responsible for all this bloodshed? If the blood of one innocent person stains someone's conscience, they will not be able to answer for it, let alone the spilling of seventeen thousand people's blood!

3. *Al-Istī'āb*, 2/457, (quoted from *Al-Ghadīr*, 3/238).

4. *Al-Ghadīr*, 3/237.

5. *Al-Mustadrak 'Alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Kitāb al-Ma'rifa, 22 (as quoted in *Al-Ghadīr*, 3/238).

6. It is important to note that the survival of so many narrations regarding just one of the many virtues of Imam Ali (a.s.), especially through Sunni books and sources, is nothing short of miraculous. During the dark and oppressive era of the Umayyads, not only was mentioning the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) forbidden and considered a crime, but tens of thousands of pulpits across the vast Islamic territory were dedicated to insulting, cursing, and defaming Ali ibn Abi Talib (God forbid). This negative propaganda was so effective that deceived people not only refused to take pride in the name Ali but some even considered it an injustice to themselves! A person once came to Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi, that notorious criminal in Islamic history, and said: "My mother has wronged me, I have a complaint against her!" Hajjaj asked: "What injustice has she done to you?" The man replied: "She named me Ali!" Therefore, the preservation of these virtuous narrations during such a harsh and bitter period, when friends didn't dare mention his virtues and enemies tried their utmost to erase them, is truly nothing short of miraculous. A talented poet has composed a beautiful poem about those bitter times, saying:

7. *Farā'id al-Simṭayn*, Chapter 47 (cited from *al-Ghadīr*, 3/224).

8. Maqrīzī in *al-Imtā'*, p. 16, states regarding this: "As for 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, he never associated partners with Allah." (*al-Ghadīr*, 3/238).

9. *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 9/102 (cited from *al-Ghadīr*, 3/227).

10. *Al-Ghadīr*, 3/228.

11. The late Sayyid Yazdī refers to this matter in his book *'Urwat al-Wuthqā*, 2/217.

12. The late 'Allāma Majlisī (may his soul be sanctified), quoting from Sunni sources, says: "Prophet Solomon (a.s.) and Prophet Daniel (a.s.) were also chosen as prophets during their childhood" (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, 38/236).

13. Those who criticize the Shia regarding the matter of dissimulation (*taqīyya*), what explanation do they have for the three years of secret preaching by the Prophet of Islam?! Isn't it true that the Prophet (s.a.w.) practiced dissimulation during this period and preserved and strengthened his forces for the appropriate time? Therefore, dissimulation (*taqīyya*), meaning changing the method of struggle and preserving, strengthening, and concealing forces for better use at the appropriate time, is one of the principles that the Shia have extracted from religious matters and the method of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

14. *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 2/62; *Tārīkh al-Kāmil*, 2/40; *Musnad Aḥmad*, 1/111 (as quoted in *Furūgh-i Abadīyyat*, 1/259).

15. In the mentioned reference, he has quoted eight different opinions regarding his age at the time of embracing Islam; the aforementioned statement refers to two of these eight opinions.

16. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 38/7 and 236.

17. Qur'ān, 7:114.

18. Qur'ān, 7:121.

19. Qur'ān, 7:124.

20. Qur'ān, 26:51.

21. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 201.

22. The late 'Allāma Ṭabarsī in *Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān*, 3/464, says about this: "They were disbelievers and sorcerers at the beginning of the day, and martyrs and righteous ones by the end of the day."

23. For Satan's advice to Prophet Noah (a.s.), refer to *Shayṭān Dushman-i Dīrīna-yi Insān*, p. 67 and *Guftār-i Anbiyā'*, p. 42 onwards.

24. *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, chapter 2192, hadith 1095 (5/288).

25. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Short Sayings, no. 458.

18

INDEED THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH AND DO RIGHTEOUS DEEDS—THE ALL-BENEFICENT WILL ENDEAR THEM

"Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds—the All-beneficent will endear them [to His creation]."

(*Sūrat Maryam*, verse 96)

Overview of the Discussion

This verse, according to numerous Sunni books, refers to Ali (a.s.), and he represents the most perfect and complete manifestation of this verse. Various discussions surround this verse, including the relationship between faith and righteous deeds with love in hearts, the views of Sunni scholars regarding the occasion of revelation of this verse, and other such matters, which we will address in detail in upcoming discussions.

Influence Over Hearts: The Most Important Asset of Leaders

The most important asset of leaders in various societies is being beloved in people's hearts. Influence over hearts is a great asset, such that important social endeavors are not possible without this asset and people's presence in social arenas. For this reason, people's

participation in social, political, cultural, and even military affairs is necessary and essential. To attract people's participation, influence over hearts and social popularity are needed. When we see that the Prophet (s.a.w.) spread the salvific religion of Islam throughout the East and West of the world in a short period, united the hearts of Muslims, and from hostile and stubborn people formed a unified and united army, using their help to propagate the true religion throughout the earth; the Qur'an identifies the secret of this as the Prophet's (s.a.w.) good character and his extraordinary influence over the hearts of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The Qur'an says in this regard:

"It is by God's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you."[1]

When Abraham (a.s.) brought his wife and infant son Ishmael, by God's command, to the dry and scorching land of Mecca, and left them with insufficient provisions near the House of God, the sacred Ka'ba, he raised his hands in supplication and prayed for them thus:

"Our Lord! I have settled part of my descendants in a barren valley, by Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may maintain the prayer. So make the hearts of a part of the people fond of them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks."[2]

Since Abraham (a.s.) knew that influence over hearts was the most important asset, he asked God to place love for his family in people's hearts.

Imam Khomeini did not have significant military weapons at his disposal until the final days of the revolution, but he possessed a sharper and more effective weapon that overcame all the advanced weapons of the tyrannical regime, and that was his influence over hearts and general popularity.

In summary, influence over hearts is the most important asset of leaders in various societies.

Commentary and Exegesis

The Connection Between Faith, Righteous Deeds, and Influence Over Hearts

"Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds—the All-beneficent will endear them [to His creation]." [19:96] In this noble verse, a connection is established between faith and righteous deeds on one hand, and influence over people's hearts on the other. God has considered general popularity to be the result of faith and righteous deeds. The meaning of this statement is that while it may be possible to gain control over people's bodies through the force of the sword and weapons, it is never possible through these means to rule over people's hearts and souls or to find a way to their hearts.

Question: What is truly the relationship between faith and righteous deeds on one hand, and influence over hearts and general acceptance on the other? Can we too attain such a great blessing through faith and righteous deeds?

Answer: The relationship between these two can be conceived in two ways:

First, a spiritual and divine connection that God establishes according to His wisdom; like the affection He created in the heart of Pharaoh and his wife for Moses (a.s.) during his infancy. Pharaoh, who had ordered the killing of all newborns in Egypt to destroy his enemy, by God's will, developed love in his heart for the infant Moses and raised his enemy with his own hands. Through this, God demonstrated His power and made Pharaoh and his followers understand that when divine will is attached to something, nothing can prevent its realization. Such relationships and attachments cannot be acquired, but are only bestowed by God.

Second, ordinary affections and popularity that can be logically analyzed. Good work and righteous deeds have an attraction that draws even unrighteous and evil people to them.

For example, trustworthiness (*amānat*) is a righteous deed and a

trustworthy person (*amīn*) is a righteous person. All people love a trustworthy person and hold them dear, even thieves and robbers trust them. When they want to entrust their stolen goods to someone, they do not go to their fellow thieves but rather seek out trustworthy people and entrust their goods to them!

Therefore, righteous deeds and faith themselves possess an attraction that results in influence over hearts. For someone who seeks to influence people's hearts, it is sufficient to demonstrate that they are a person of faith who performs righteous deeds. When people realize that someone possesses faith and performs righteous deeds, their hearts are naturally drawn to that person without any special effort being required.

Chastity and modesty are among other highly valuable righteous deeds. These qualities are so precious that even the unchaste are drawn to them. When they intend to marry and establish a family, they seek out chaste families and avoid the unchaste! Interestingly, Ali (a.s.), who is the subject of this verse, attained this great asset both through faith and righteous deeds—at their highest level—and through God placing love for him in people's hearts and minds.

The Context of the Revelation of the Verse of Love

Although this noble verse has a general and broad meaning that includes every believer who performs righteous deeds whose faith and righteous actions have made them beloved, undoubtedly its most perfect and complete exemplar is the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.), as has been explicitly stated in various Sunni books, even though some have tried to deny this clear and evident fact!

The late ʿAllāma Ḥillī in the book *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*[3] considers the context of the revelation of the above verse to be related to Ali (a.s.). Qāḍī Rūzbihān, one of the Sunni scholars, in refuting ʿAllāma's statement, says:

"This narration is not found in Sunni exegesis, and even if it were authentic, it would only indicate the obligation of loving him, which is unanimously agreed upon".[4]

Interestingly, the Shi'i researchers who annotated *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq* cite narrations about Ali (a.s.) from 17 Sunni books, among which there are actually six books of exegesis! How can this contradiction in the words of Sunni scholars be explained? Did Qāḍī Rūzbihān not study these books?! Or did he study them, but the veils of prejudice and obstinacy prevented him from accepting these traditions?! In any case, the books in question are as follows:

1.The exegesis of Tha'labī[5]

2.*Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, written by the famous Sunni exegete Zamakhsharī[6]

3.The exegesis of 'Allāma Nīshābūrī, which was printed in the margins of Ṭabarī's exegesis[7]

4.Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*[8]

5.'Allāma Shawkānī in his exegesis[9]

6.The famous scholar Ālūsī in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*[10]

Consider three narrations from the mentioned books:

A. In *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, it is reported that Barā' ibn 'Āzib, a well-known companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.), says:

The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said to Ali: "Say: 'O God, establish for me a covenant with You, and place love for me in the hearts of the believers.'" Then God revealed this verse.

And Muhammad ibn Ḥanafiyya used to say: "You will not find a believer except that they love Ali and his family".[11]

Question: What is meant by the covenant and pledge mentioned in this narration?

Answer: It is possible that this covenant refers to what was mentioned in verse 87 of *Sūrat Maryam*, a few verses before the verse under discussion, where we read:

Therefore, what is meant by covenant is intercession; the Prophet says to Ali: "Ask God to grant you the station of intercession (*shafā'a*) and to place affection and love for you in the hearts of the believers."

This love and affection began from the time of Abraham, the Friend of God, with his supplication, and continued until the time of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). After that, it will remain until the Day of Resurrection.

B. ʿAllāma Shawkānī, quoting from Ṭabarānī, who quotes from Ibn ʿAbbās, narrates:

"The verse 'Indeed those who believe and do righteous deeds...' was revealed concerning Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib." He said: "[It refers to] love in the hearts of the believers".[12]

The noble verse "Indeed those who believe and..." was revealed concerning Ali (a.s.), and what is meant by "affection" (*wudd*) is love and influence in the hearts of the believers.

The conclusion of all the previous discussions is that this noble verse establishes a connection between faith and righteous deeds with influence in hearts, and according to the narrations, the most perfect exemplar of this connection is Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (a.s.).

Other Exegeses of the Verse Under Discussion

In addition to the exegesis already discussed, several other explanations have been presented for this verse, including:

A. The meaning of this verse is not about placing love for a specific individual or individuals in the hearts of all believers and Muslims. Rather, it means that faith and righteous deeds cause all believers to love one another, or in other words, the love of all believers is placed in the hearts of all believers.

B. This verse refers to the Day of Resurrection. God will place the love of believers in each other's hearts on the Day of Resurrection, therefore it has no connection to this world.

C. The meaning of this verse refers exclusively to Ali (a.s.) and includes no other believer. The use of plural forms and pronouns does not create any difficulty, since plurals are sometimes used as a mark of respect.[13]

However, in fairness, all these explanations can be reconciled, and the verse encompasses all believers who perform righteous deeds, even though its most perfect exemplar and complete manifestation is Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (a.s.). This is just as the light of a candle, lamp, bulb, projector, and the sun are all light, but undoubtedly sunlight is the most perfect and complete manifestation of light.

The Message of the Verse

The Shi'a: A Brilliant Lamp

As we have said many times, although the followers (*Shī'a*) of Imam Ali (a.s.) must strive diligently to understand the virtues and perfections of the Imam and his pure household, they must certainly not be content with this alone. Rather, after recognizing these virtues, they must move forward in their light and find the path of salvation and prosperity, and show it to others as well.

The followers of Ali must shine like a brilliant lamp in their society, both in terms of faith and righteous deeds. This way, others may be guided by the light of their faith, causing their love to penetrate the hearts of others, and consequently becoming a source of adornment and joy for the noble Imams – not, God forbid, acting in such a way as to cause embarrassment and shame to their divine and heavenly leaders! [14]

Supplementary Discussions

1. Penetrating All Hearts

The apparent meaning of this noble verse is that faith and righteous deeds not only cause the love of a believer to penetrate the hearts of other believers, but the flame of this love also conquers the hearts of non-believers.

For this reason, even the enemies of Ali (a.s.) loved him, although their base desires did not allow them to constantly express this love, they were sometimes compelled to express it.

Mu'āwiya would repeatedly ask the companions of Ali (a.s.), whenever he met them, to recount Ali's qualities for him, and after hearing them, he would affirm them.[15]

'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, that cunning deceiver, from whom all the plots and sabotage during Mu'āwiya's era originated, and who was in fact

the primary perpetrator of Muʿāwiya's crimes while Muʿāwiya played a secondary role, beautifully confesses to the crimes of Muʿāwiya's era and the virtues of Ali (a.s.) in his famous poem known as the *Jaljiliyya* .[16] Here are selected verses from his poem:

"O Muʿāwiya, do not be ignorant of the situation, And do not deviate from the paths of truth.

I deceived them when they raised The copies of the Qur'an on spears in the dust of battle.

Have you forgotten the dialogue with al-Ashʿarī When we were at Dūmat al-Jandal?

I stripped the caliphate from Ḥaydar As easily as sandals are removed from feet.

And I clothed you with it after despair Like rings being placed on fingers.

How many instructions have we heard from the Chosen One (s.a.w.) Specifically concerning Ali?

And on the day of Ghadīr he ascended a pulpit To deliver the message while the caravan had not yet departed."

And holding his hand in his hand, announcing He proclaimed by the command of the Mighty, the High

And he said, "For whomever I am a master, This one is for him today an excellent guardian

And surely we, and what we have done, Are in the Fire, in its lowest depths"[17]

O Muʿāwiya! (I must confess a bitter truth, which is that:) I and you and our actions and deeds (and those who have been with us) will burn in the depths of hellfire in the hereafter and will be placed in the lowest depths!

2. The Scope of Righteous Deeds

Righteous deeds are very important and valuable in Islam, such that more than 70 verses of the Qur'an discuss this topic. Righteous deeds (*ʿamal ṣāliḥ*) have a broad and comprehensive meaning and wide scope, encompassing any good work done for the sake of God's plea-

sure. In a beautiful narration from the Prophet (s.a.w.) that explains the scope of righteous deeds, we read:

"Faith has seventy (or sixty in another version) branches. The highest of them is testifying that there is no god but God, and the lowest of them is removing harmful objects from the path"[18]

This narration, in addition to expressing the broad scope of righteous deeds, points to the fact that Islam pays special attention to the smallest matters in Muslims' lives and recommends that Muslims observe these minor matters as well.

1. Qur'ān, 3:159.

2. Qur'ān, 14:37.

3. The book *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, which is one of the most valuable Shi'a books, consists of four parts. Its first author was the late 'Allāma Ḥillī. Qāḍī Rūzbahān, a Sunni scholar, wrote rebuttals to this book, which were later appended to it. Then, the late Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Tustarī wrote in support of 'Allāma Ḥillī's statements and in refutation of Qāḍī Rūzbahān's points, which was also appended to this book. Finally, the late Grand Ayatollah Mar'ashī Najafī, with the help of several of his companions, added useful annotations and footnotes to it, and it is now available in its current form to seekers of knowledge.

4. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/87.

5. *Tafsīr al-Tha'labī*, p. 151 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/82).

6. *Al-Kashshāf*, 2/425 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/83).

7. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 16/74 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/84).

8. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4/487 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/85).

9. *Tafsīr al-Shawkānī*, 3/342 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/86).

10. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 16/130 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/86).

11. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/86.

12. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/86.

13. The three mentioned possibilities and other possibilities are found in *Majma' al-Bayān*, 3/3 and 532.

14. As mentioned in numerous narrations, including a hadith

from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) who said: "Be an adornment for us and not a disgrace upon us" (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, 68/286). Similar narrations have been reported from Imam al-Riḍā (a.s.) (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, 75/348) and from Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (a.s.) (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, 75/372).

15. We have included examples of these events in *110 Dāstān az Zindagānī-yi Ḥaḍrat ʿAlī* (a.s.), Section Five.

16. The reason ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ composed the aforementioned verses was that: Muʿāwiya appointed him as governor of Egypt. It was customary for governors to collect revenues, taxes, and tributes, keeping a portion for themselves and sending the remainder to the central government. However, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ refused to follow this tradition and sent nothing to Muʿāwiya. Muʿāwiya became upset with this action and wrote him a letter reproaching him and ordering him to send a portion of Egypt's revenue and tribute to the central government. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who had rendered numerous services to Muʿāwiya and in some cases had saved his government from collapse, now saw that Muʿāwiya had forgotten his services. He composed the Jaljaliyya poem and sent it to Muʿāwiya. When the poem reached Muʿāwiya, he apparently regretted his actions and said: "Leave ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Egypt's tribute alone!"

17. *Al-Ghadīr*, 2/114.

18. *ʿAwālī al-Laʾālī*, 1/431. The mentioned narration also appears with slight variation in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book of Faith, Chapter 12, Hadith 58. Its text is as follows: "Faith has seventy or sixty-something branches, the highest of which is saying 'There is no god but Allah' and the lowest of which is removing harmful objects from the path, and modesty is a branch of faith." This narration is also reported with slight variation in *Musnad Aḥmad*, 2/379.

19

AND THE FOREMOST ONES ARE THE FOREMOST ONES

"And the Foremost Ones are the foremost ones, they are the ones brought near [to God], [who will reside] in the gardens of bliss"
(*Sūrat al-Wāqi'a*, verses 10-12)

Overview of the Discussion

These noble verses also contain another of the virtues and merits of the master of the pious ones, Ali (a.s.), which Sunni scholars have also extensively acknowledged. In these verses, which speak of the three groups of people on the Day of Resurrection, there are both bitter and sweet instructive points, which we will address in the continuation of our discussion.

The Content of *Sūrat al-Wāqi'a*

Sūrat al-Wāqi'a, like other chapters of the Qur'an, is rich in content and contains striking subjects. The main themes of the verses in this chapter revolve around the resurrection and the world after death. Its opening verses begin by describing the signs and effects of the Day of Resurrection. The resurrection begins with a revolution, just as the

creation of the earth, sky, and galaxies was accompanied by a revolution and explosion. Thus, the world begins with a revolution and ends with a revolution and explosion! During the resurrection, the earth will shake violently and the mountains, despite all their grandeur and weight, will be hurled into the sky and collide with each other, and their collision will be so intense that they will turn into scattered dust. God will then establish the hereafter on the ruins of this world and create another earth and sky. On that day, the humans who have risen from their graves and been brought back to life will be divided into three groups:

1- The "Companions of the Right" (*aṣḥāb al-maymana*) - Some will be placed in the group of the Companions of the Right; these are the fortunate and blessed ones, and honor, blessing, and happiness belong to them.

2- The "Companions of the Left" (*aṣḥāb al-mash'ama*)[1] - Another group are the ill-fated, unfortunate, and wretched people; these are those who will receive their book of deeds in their left hand!

3- "The Foremost Ones are the foremost ones" - The third group are the forerunners who are foremost. God has designated for this group, who are the most fortunate of the three groups, a medal of honor that no one else possesses. And that medal of honor is the "station of proximity" (*maqām al-qurb*) to God. Indeed, the forerunners are those brought near to the divine presence.

After this classification, God proceeds to explain and expound upon the rewards and punishments of the three groups; dazzling rewards, the contemplation of which brings ecstasy, and painful torments, the mere thought of which is distressing! Verses 11 to 26 deal with the rewards of those brought near (*muqarrabūn*) and the forerunners (*sābiqūn*), rewards that are sometimes beyond comprehension, and those that can be imagined are delightful. From verse 27 to 40, the rewards of the Companions of the Right are discussed, and from verse 41 onwards, the painful punishments of the Companions of the Left are explained in detail.

Explanation and Commentary

Who are the Forerunners?

"And the Foremost Ones are the foremost ones, they are the ones brought near [to God]"

Question: Who are these forerunners of the forerunners who have received the medal of divine proximity?

Answer: Various explanations have been given for the forerunners (*sābiqūn*):

1- The forerunners in faith

2- The forerunners in holy struggle (*jihād*) and combat

3- The forerunners in worship and the five daily prayers

4- The forerunners in repentance

5- The forerunners in obedience to God

6- The forerunners in entering paradise

7- The forerunners in migration (*hijra*)

8- The forerunners in good deeds

And other explanations that the exegetes have mentioned .[2]

In our view, there is no problem in considering all of these mentioned cases as being intended by this verse. Therefore, we should not restrict the verse to just one of these cases, but rather consider a broad and expansive meaning that encompasses all forerunners. In any case, the forerunners (*sābiqūn*) have numerous distinctions, and at the peak of their lofty achievements is the blessing of proximity to God.

Without doubt, the pleasure that divine proximity brings to those brought near (*muqarrabūn*) and the forerunners (*sābiqūn*) is higher than any other pleasure.

"In Gardens of Bliss"

Are such rewards befitting anyone other than the forerunners (*sābiqūn*)?

Our Lord, by Your grace and generosity, guide us toward this group.

Ali (a.s.) is the Most Perfect and Complete Example of the Forerunners!

As mentioned, the meaning of the noble verse about the forerunners (*sābiqūn*) is expansive, and includes all those who took precedence in faith, holy struggle (*jihād*), prayer, repentance, obedience, entry into paradise, and the like. However, according to what has been reported in the traditions, Ali (a.s.) is the forerunner of all forerunners and precedes all those who precede. In other words, Ali (a.s.) is the clear example, indeed the clearest example, of this noble verse. Consider some of these traditions:

A- Ibn ʿAbbās, the well-known narrator and exegete who is accepted by both Shi'i and Sunni scholars, says:

"The forerunner of this community is Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib"[3]

"Joshua son of Nun preceded others to Moses, and the believer of the family of Yāsīn preceded others to Jesus, and Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib preceded others to Muhammad"[4]

"I have married you to the first one who believed in me, recognized me, and supported me"[5]

"Is he not the first to pray toward their direction (*qibla*) and the most knowledgeable of people regarding the Qur'an and traditions (*sunan*)?"[6]

1- Ibn Maghāzilī in *Musnad*[7]

2- Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī in *Tadhkira*[8]

3- Ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī[9]

4- Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī in *al-Riyāḍ al-Naḍira*[10]

5- Al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*[11]

6- Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Ṣawā ʿiq al-Muḥriqa*[12]

7- ʿAllāma al-Shawkānī in *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*[13]

8- Mīr Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Tirmidhī in *Manāqib Murtaḍawī*[14]

9- Al-Ālūsī in *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*[15]

10- Al-Qundūzī in *Yanābīʿ al-Mawadda*[16]

Given the numerous traditions concerning Ali (a.s.) that have been reported in relation to the above verse, is it possible that God

would appoint someone else for the caliphate despite the presence of Ali (a.s.) with all his virtues!

The Explanation of "The Foremost" from the Words of the Prophet (s.a.w.)

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said in a tradition:

"The foremost (*sābiqūn*) to the shade of the Throne, blessed are they!"

It was asked: "O Messenger of God, who are they?"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) replied to this question:

1- "Those who accept the truth when they hear it"

The foremost ones accept the truth even if it comes from the mouth of an enemy or a child; they show no prejudice, stubbornness, argumentation, or arrogance in the face of truth. When a person realizes their mistake and the truth becomes clear to them, they must courageously accept the truth and acknowledge their error, knowing that the cost of admitting a mistake is far less than denying it!

2- "And they give it when asked for it"

The foremost ones do not conceal the truth; they do not say that if we speak the truth, our parents, spouse, friend, neighbor, or others will be upset, for concealing the truth is among the major sins, and bearing witness to what one knows is obligatory, as God states in verse 283 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*:

"And do not conceal testimony; anyone who conceals it, his heart will indeed be sinful. And Allah knows best what you do."

"And do not conceal testimony; anyone who conceals it, his heart will indeed be sinful. And God knows best what you do."

3- "And they judge for others as they judge for themselves"[17]

In other words, they look at their own interests and those of others with the same eye! Undoubtedly, this is a difficult task. If we look at everyone with the same eye, submit to the truth, accept it, and speak the truth, we will be among the foremost (*sābiqūn*).

If today's world were to act upon these three directives, it would become a garden of paradise; but unfortunately, the double standards

of those who claim to champion human rights have turned today's world into a burning hell. The concept of human rights has taken on a different meaning in the minds of people worldwide. When people today hear this term from its false claimants, they understand a new meaning from it, which is "preserving the interests of the powerful and mighty at any cost and under any circumstances"!

1. "*Maymana*" and "*Mash'ama*" can be interpreted in two ways: first with the meaning of "blessing and fortune" and "misfortune and adversity," and second meaning right and left hand. Since these two words are placed in opposition to each other, one could say the first meaning is intended, and since the following verses speak of giving the book of deeds to the fortunate in their right hand and to the wretched in their left hand, the second meaning could also be intended.

2. These possibilities are mentioned in *Tafsīr Namūna*, 23/204, *Tafsīr al-Tibyān*, 9/490, and *Majma' al-Bayān*, 5/215.

3. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/114.

4. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/115.

5. *Rawḍat al-Aḥbāb*, 3/10 (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/117).

6. The above poem is by Khuzayma ibn Thābit.

7. Cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/114.

8. *Tadhkira*, p. 21 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/115).

9. *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 4/283 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/115).

10. *Al-Riyāḍ al-Naḍira*, p. 158 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/115).

11. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 6/154 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/116).

12. *Al-Ṣawā'iq*, p. 123 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/116).

13. *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 5/148 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/117).

14. *Manāqib Murtaḍawī*, p. 49 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/117).

15. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 27/114 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/118).

16. *Yanābī' al-Mawadda*, p. 60 (cited in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/118).

17. *Nawādir al-Rāwandī*, p. 15 (cited in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 66/403).

20

...THAT WE MIGHT MAKE IT A REMINDER FOR YOU, AND THAT RECEPTIVE EARS MIGHT REMEMBER IT

"Indeed when the Flood rose high, We carried you in a floating ark, that We might make it a reminder for you, and that receptive ears might remember it."

(*Sūrat al-Ḥāqqa*, verses 11 and 12)

Overview of the Discussion

The noble verse "receptive ear" (*udhun wā'iya*) is among the other verses concerning the virtues of Ali (a.s.).

According to the narrations that have been transmitted regarding this noble verse, the Prophet (s.a.w.) prayed that Ali would be among those who possess a "receptive ear" (*udhun wā'iya*). And this prayer was answered. The details of these narrations, the explanation and exegesis of the verse under discussion, and the meaning of "receptive ear" (*udhun wā'iya*) are topics that will be addressed in the upcoming discussions.

Explanation and Exegesis

The Story of the Prophets

The Qur'an, not only in *Sūrat al-Ḥāqqa* but in many other chapters as well, examines the stories of the prophets and past nations from various angles.

Question: Why does the Qur'an address the history of past nations and present the stories of previous prophets? Is the Qur'an a book of history?

Answer: The Qur'an is a book for human development, and history plays an important role in human education and training. Life, in essence, is about experience, and how much better it is for a person to benefit from the experiences of those who came before, rather than, as the poet says, having to live twice - once to gain experience and again to make use of those experiences.[1]

God states in verse 111 of *Sūrat Yūsuf*:

"There is certainly a moral in their accounts for those who possess intellect."

At the beginning of *Sūrat al-Ḥāqqa* there is also a reference to the story of the prophets and previous nations, which we will briefly explain:

"Then brought Pharaoh and those who were before him, and the towns that were overturned, iniquity" - Pharaoh and those who came before him, meaning the people of Shu'ayb, 'Ād, Thamūd and others, as well as the people of the overturned cities, committed great sins. The term "overturned" (*mu'tafikāt*) is the plural of *mu'tafika*, meaning cities that were turned upside down, and refers to the story of the people of Lot. When divine punishment descended upon the rebellious people of Lot, their houses were so destroyed by the earthquake that it was as if their city had been turned upside down. After the earthquake, a rain of stones fell upon that city and completely destroyed what remained of it. The cause of all these punishments

was their errors and sins, which is referenced at the end of the verse (with iniquity).

"Then they disobeyed the messenger of their Lord, so He seized them with a terrible seizing" - Previous nations opposed the messengers of their Lord, and God afflicted them with severe punishment. The use of "their Lord" (*rabbihim*) indicates that God wants to educate people by sending messengers; however, some people who walk the path of sin rise up in disobedience to the commands of their educator. For this reason, they deserve punishment and retribution.

"Indeed when the Flood rose high, We carried you in a floating ark" - This verse refers to the story of Noah (a.s.). When by God's command water began to pour from the sky as a flood, and gushed forth from the earth as great springs, such that in a short time the water even covered the mountains, God saved Noah and those who believed in his religion, who were aboard Noah's ark, from the danger of drowning.

However, the idol-worshippers and polytheists, even Noah's son who followed the path of polytheism and idol-worship, all drowned in the water. Yes, those who once mocked Noah (a.s.) for building a ship far from the sea and even accused this great prophet of God of madness! When the flood and rain came, they were caught in the grip of divine punishment and received the consequences of their actions.

"That We might make it a reminder for you, and that receptive ears might remember it" - The narration of the stories of past nations and previous prophets in the Qur'an is not merely for the purpose of explaining and describing history, but rather the aim is that their bitter fate might serve as a reminder and awakening for you, and that attentive ears might preserve and retain these stories. The term "retention" (*wa'y*) means to place something in the heart. Contemporary Arabs use the term *wa'y* for deep thought. Therefore, "receptive ears" (*udhun wā'iya*) refers to hearing ears that retain and preserve something.

That is, ears that neither forget nor fail to act upon what they hear, ears that are not subject to the proverb that says "it enters through one ear and exits through the other," but rather hear with

both ears and preserve what they hear. The possessors of "receptive ears" (*udhun wā'iya*) have hearing ears, seeing eyes, and knowing hearts.

Who is the Possessor of "Receptive Ears"?

Although this noble verse has a broad meaning and includes all those who possess "receptive ears" (*udhun wā'iya*), according to numerous traditions regarding its exegesis, the most perfect and complete exemplar of "receptive ears" (*udhun wā'iya*) is Ali (a.s.).

In some traditions, it is reported that when this noble verse was revealed, the Prophet (s.a.w.) addressed Ali (a.s.) saying:

"I asked God to make your ears receptive, O Ali"[2]

Ali (a.s.) says: After this incident, there was nothing that I heard from the Prophet that I forgot. My ears were always receptive, retaining what they heard, and I never forgot anything.

Some traditions state that first the Prophet (s.a.w.) made this supplication for Ali (a.s.), and then this noble verse was revealed.

The tradition mentioned above appears in various Sunni sources, of which ten examples are cited below:

1- Qurṭubī in *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*[3]

2- 'Allāma Muttaqī Hindī in *Muntakhab Kanz al-'Ummāl*[4]

3- 'Allāma Ālūsī in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*[5]

4- 'Allāma Wāḥidī Nīshāpūrī in *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*[6]

5- Abū Nu'aym Iṣfahānī in *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*[7]

6- Ṭabarī in his exegesis[8]

7- Zamakhsharī in *al-Kashshāf*[9]

8- Tha'labī in his exegesis[10]

9- 'Allāma Andalusī Maghribī in *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*[11]

10- Ganjī in *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*[12]

Fakhr Rāzī, despite his strong bias in discussions of leadership (*imāmat*) and authority (*wilāya*), has narrated an interesting tradition regarding the above noble verse. After relating the Prophet's supplication concerning Ali (a.s.), he quotes the following statement from the Commander of the Faithful:

"After that, I never forgot anything, nor was it possible for me to forget"[13]

This means that after the Prophet's (s.a.w.) supplication, Ali's heart became a treasury of divine revelation and a repository of the Prophet's words.

Contradiction in the Words of Shaykh Rūzbahān!

Shaykh Rūzbahān, who wrote in refutation of Allāma Ḥillī's writings, when he comes to this noble verse, says:

"When this verse was revealed, the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said to Ali (a.s.): 'I asked God to make your ears receptive (*wā'iya*).' Ali said: 'After this, I never forgot anything.' This indicates his knowledge, memory, and excellence."

When the verse "that receptive ears might remember it" was revealed, the Prophet (s.a.w.) addressed Ali (a.s.) saying: "I have asked God to make your ears 'receptive ears' (*udhn wā'iya*)." Ali says: "After this supplication, I never forgot anything." After narrating the above tradition, Shaykh Rūzbahān says: "This tradition indicates Ali's knowledge and learning, his powerful memory, and his excellence and superiority."

After relating the above tradition and his own statement about Ali's status that follows it, he says: "But these qualities do not prove Ali's immediate leadership (*imāmat*) and succession (*khilāfa*)!"[14]

The response to this statement is clear, for knowledge and awareness are among the fundamental pillars of leadership (*imāmat*), since the Imam is the successor of the Prophet and must be informed of all the Prophet's (s.a.w.) traditions (*sunna*). The Imam must be able to solve people's problems, and it is clear that this requires knowledge and awareness at the highest level. Therefore, the person who is most knowledgeable and learned among all people is most worthy of succession (*khilāfa*). Hence we say: By your own admission, Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) possessed extraordinary knowledge, excellence, intelligence and acumen, and was superior to other claimants to the

succession in these respects. What intellect or logic would permit us to turn to others when such an outstanding person exists!

Therefore, how can this noble verse indicate Ali's (a.s.) extraordinary knowledge and piety, yet have no connection to succession (*khilāfa*) and leadership (*imāmat*)! Is this not an obvious contradiction!

A Subtle Point from Fakhr Rāzī

Fakhr Rāzī, in his exegesis of "receptive ears" (*udhn wā'iya*), raises this question:

Why does "receptive ears" (*udhn wā'iya*) appear in the singular and indefinite form, rather than in the plural and definite form?

Then, in response to this question, he points to three aspects:

1."To indicate that those who are receptive (*wu'āt*) among them are few"

2."To reproach people for how few among them are receptive"

3."To indicate that a single ear that is receptive and comprehends from God is the greatest multitude in God's view, and all others are not given attention"[15]

Considering these points, and given that according to the traditions "receptive ears" was explained as referring to Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), we conclude that the receptive ear of the Islamic community is Ali (a.s.), and this clarifies the significance of the occasion of revelation and the Prophet's (s.a.w.) supplication for Ali (a.s.).

Ali is with Truth and Truth is with Ali!

To better understand the various dimensions of the unique personality of the true and immediate successor of the Prophet (s.a.w.), we draw your attention to three traditions that are also found in Sunni sources:

1- Ṭabarānī narrates from Umm Salama, the faithful wife of the Prophet, who relates from the Prophet (s.a.w.):

"Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with Ali, they will not separate until they meet me at the Pool"[16]

Question: What does it mean that "Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with Ali"? Does it mean that Ali (a.s.) always carries a Qur'an with him? Or does it mean that he has memorized the entire Qur'an? Or did the Prophet (s.a.w.) mean something else?

Answer: It means that the knowledge and exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the Qur'an is with Ali and cannot be separated from him, and that acting upon the contents and commands of the Qur'an cannot be separated from Ali (a.s.). Ali is both knowledgeable about and acts upon the Qur'an, and knowledge of and action upon the Qur'an are inseparable from Ali. This is a great and special distinction that we do not find for any other companion of the Prophet.

The Prophet's (s.a.w.) Prayer for Ali (a.s.)

2- Ḥākim Nīshāpūrī in his book *al-Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* narrates with a sound and reliable chain of transmission the following tradition from Ali (a.s.) from the Prophet (s.a.w.):

He said: "The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) sent me to Yemen, so I said: 'O Messenger of God, you have sent me while I am young to judge between them, and I do not know how to judge.' He struck my chest and then said (s.a.w.): 'O God, guide his heart and make firm his tongue.' By the One who split the seed, I never doubted in judging between any two people after that."[17]

According to this tradition, through the blessing of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) prayer, Ali (a.s.) always judged correctly and never experienced any doubt or uncertainty in any case.[18]

Ali (a.s.) - The Best Judge!

3- A person came to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and posed this question: "A cow and a donkey were in a stable. The cow attacked the donkey and killed it. What is the ruling on this?"

The Prophet's companions, who were present in the company of

the Prophet (s.a.w.), looked at each other and said: "Animals have no religious obligations; one animal has killed another animal - one cannot rule for retribution (*qiṣāṣ*) or blood money (*diya*)!"

The Prophet (s.a.w.) addressed Ali (a.s.) and asked: "What is the ruling on this matter?"

Ali (a.s.) asked the owner of the two animals: "Were both animals tied up, or were both untied, or was one tied and the other free?"

He replied: "The owner of the donkey had tied up his animal, while the owner of the cow had left it untied!"

Ali (a.s.) said: "In this case, the owner of the cow must pay compensation to the owner of the donkey!"

After confirming Ali's (a.s.) ruling and judgment, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"Ali is the best judge among you."[19]

Ali's (a.s.) judgment in this story exemplifies what is now established in Shi'i jurisprudence as a general rule, which is: "When the cause is stronger than the direct agent, the cause is liable." In the above story, the cow is the direct agent (*mubāshir*) of the killing, and its owner who left it untied is the cause (*sabab*) of the killing, but since the cause is stronger - as the owner is rational while the animal lacks rationality - the cause is therefore liable.[20]

Based on what has been discussed, Ali (a.s.) is the possessor of the "receptive ear" (*udhun wā'iya*), the inseparable companion of the Qur'an, the most qualified person in matters of judgment, the most knowledgeable and aware Muslim, and the most virtuous among the Prophet's companions. Given this, if God were to appoint someone as the successor and caliph of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), would divine wisdom allow anyone other than Ali to be appointed! And if this responsibility were to be placed upon the people, would those possessing intellect and wisdom, in the presence of Ali and his qualities and characteristics, turn to someone else!

We must once again raise our hands to the heavens and sincerely thank God for bestowing upon us the blessing of following such an exalted and unparalleled person, and for making us among the Shi'a of Ali (a.s.). We should be grateful to our fathers and mothers who

acquainted us with the love, devotion, and affection for Ali (a.s.) and taught us the lesson of leadership (*wilāya*). We should send our salutations to all the teachers, professors, scholars, and thinkers who throughout history, through their tremendous efforts, have raised the banner of leadership in this land of Ali, and who have been excellent guides for the followers of Ali (a.s.). And let us ask from the Lord of Ali:

O Lord! Keep the sweet love of Ali alive in our hearts and souls, and make our descendants until the Day of Resurrection among the true Shi'a of that noble person!

O God! Let Ali and his pure household come to our aid in the difficult moments of death and the terrifying stations of the Day of Resurrection!

O God! Grant us the success to be good Shi'a and followers of this pure household in our words and deeds, in such a way that we may earn their pleasure and satisfaction!

1. The poet says about this: "To gain one experience and apply it with another!"

2. *Al-Kashshāf*, 4/134 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/149).

3. *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 18/264 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/151).

4. *Muntakhab Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 5/148 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/151).

5. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 29/43 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/153).

6. *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, p. 339 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/148).

7. *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, 1/67 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/148).

8. *Tafsīr Ṭabarī*, 29/31 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/147).

9. *Al-Kashshāf*, 4/134 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/149).

10. Quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/149.

11. *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 8/322 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/151).

12. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, p. 111 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/150).

13. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 30/107 (quoted from *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/149).

14. *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/154.

15. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 30/107.

16. *Nūr al-Abṣār*, p. 89.

17. *Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (quoted from *Nūr al-Abṣār*, p. 88). The above narration is reported in *Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 3/135 but with slight variations from the mentioned narration.

18. This oath is very important, which is why it is frequently found in the words of the Infallibles (a.s.). When a seed splits in the heart of the soil, it is like when a newborn comes into the world - all the principles governing the fetus and its birth apply to this seed as well.

19. *Nūr al-Abṣār*, 88.

20. Just as when a person invites another to their home and has a vicious dog, but does not inform the guest that their dog attacks humans and also does not protect and watch over the guest, and if the host's dog attacks the guest upon entering the host's house causing damage, the host is liable. Because although the dog is the direct cause and the homeowner is the indirect cause, since the indirect cause is stronger than the direct cause in this case, the indirect cause bears liability.

21

...THEN GOD IS INDEED HIS GUARDIAN, AND GABRIEL, THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE FAITHFUL...

"If the two of you repent to God . . . for your hearts have certainly swerved, and if you back each other against him, then [know that] God is indeed his guardian, and Gabriel, the righteous among the faithful, and, thereafter, the angels are his supporters."

(*Sūrat al-Taḥrīm*, verse 4)

Overview of the Discussion

The above noble verse, which has become known as the verse of "the righteous among the faithful" (*ṣāliḥ al-mu'minīn*), is among the verses that, by the acknowledgment of both Shi'i and Sunni scholars, indicates another of the many virtues of Ali (a.s.). How this verse indicates the virtue of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) and its connection to the matter of his leadership (*wilāya*) will be explained in detail in the upcoming discussions.

The Context of Revelation

This is the fourth verse of *Sūrat al-Taḥrīm*. Regarding the context of revelation of the first verses of *Sūrat al-Taḥrīm*, numerous accounts have been narrated in both Shi'i and Sunni books of exegesis (*tafsīr*), hadith, and history. What appears to be the most well-known and appropriate account is as follows: When the Prophet (s.a.w.) would visit Zaynab bint Jaḥsh, one of his wives, she would offer him some honey that she had prepared. This matter reached the ears of Aisha, another of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) wives, and it troubled her.

She says: I made an agreement with Hafsa, another wife of the Messenger of God (s.a.w.), that whenever the Prophet (s.a.w.) came to either of us, we would immediately ask him: "Have you eaten *maghāfīr* gum?" [1] The Prophet (s.a.w.) was particular about never having an unpleasant odor emanate from his mouth or clothes; on the contrary, he was always keen to be fragrant and perfumed. However, this gum had an unpleasant smell, and if this plan worked, the Prophet (s.a.w.) would refrain from drinking that honey.

Thus, one day when the Prophet (s.a.w.) came to Hafsa, she said this to him. The Prophet (s.a.w.) replied: "I have not eaten *maghāfīr*; rather, I drank honey that was at Zaynab bint Jaḥsh's house. I swear that I will not drink that honey again."

(Could it be that the bee had landed on an unsuitable plant, possibly *maghāfīr*!) But do not tell this to anyone (lest it reach the ears of people who might say: "Why has the Prophet (s.a.w.) forbidden himself a permissible food?" Or it might reach Zaynab and hurt her feelings).

However, Hafsa eventually revealed the Prophet's secret, and later it became clear that this whole affair had been a conspiracy. The Prophet (s.a.w.) was troubled by this incident, and the above verses were revealed. This put an end to such matters in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) household, preventing their recurrence, as what might begin with a small matter today could escalate to more significant issues tomorrow.[2]

Some narrations also mention that after this incident, the Prophet

(s.a.w.) withdrew from his wives for a month.[3] The situation reached such a point that rumors spread about his intention to divorce those two wives, which terrified them greatly[4] and led them to regret their actions.

Explanation and Exegesis

The Supporters of the Prophet (s.a.w.)

To clarify the exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the verse under discussion, we must first take a brief look at the verses that precede it.

Without doubt, a great personality like the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) does not belong to himself alone, but rather to the entire Islamic community and humanity. Therefore, if a conspiracy against him takes place within his household, even if seemingly minor, it should not be taken lightly. His dignity must not, God forbid, become a plaything in anyone's hands. If such an incident occurs, it must be dealt with decisively to prevent it from spreading to more serious matters.

The opening verses of *Sūrat al-Taḥrīm* are in fact a decisive command from God regarding such an incident, and to protect His Prophet's dignity, He says:

"O Prophet! Why do you prohibit [yourself] what God has made lawful for you, seeking to please your wives?"

It is clear that this prohibition was not a religious prohibition (*taḥrīm shar'ī*). Rather, as we understand from the subsequent verses, the Prophet (s.a.w.) had taken an oath, and we know that swearing to abstain from certain permissible things is not a sin. Therefore, the phrase "Why do you prohibit" (*lima tuḥarrim*) is not meant as a rebuke or reproach, but rather as an expression of compassion.

It is like when we say to someone who works very hard to earn a living but barely benefits from it: "Why do you trouble yourself so much without enjoying the fruits of your labor?"

Then at the end of the verse, it states: "And God is all-forgiving,

all-merciful." This forgiveness and mercy refers to the wives who caused that incident, who would be included in it if they truly repent. Or it indicates that it would have been better if the Prophet (s.a.w.) had not taken such an oath, an action that might have encouraged boldness and audacity in some of his wives.

"God has certainly made lawful for you the dissolution of your oaths." In the next verse it adds: God has made clear the way to release yourselves from your oaths (in such cases), by paying the expiation (*kaffāra*) for the oath and freeing yourself. Of course, if the oath concerns a matter where abstaining from an action is preferable, then one must fulfill the oath, and breaking it is a sin that requires expiation. However, if it concerns matters where abstaining from the action is less preferable (as in the verse under discussion), then breaking it is permissible, though it is better to give expiation to maintain respect for the oath.

"And God is your master and He is the All-knowing, the All-wise."

Thus, He has made clear the path to freedom from such oaths for you, and according to His knowledge and wisdom, He has resolved this difficulty for you. It is understood from the narrations that after the revelation of this verse, the Prophet (s.a.w.) freed a slave and made lawful for himself what he had forbidden through his oath.

In the next verse, it provides more detail about this incident, stating:

"When the Prophet confided to one of his wives a matter, but when she divulged it, and God apprised him about it, he announced [to her] part of it and disregarded part of it."

Regarding what this secret was and which of the Prophet's wives disclosed his secret (s.a.w.), we have discussed this in the section on the occasion of revelation.

From these verses as a whole, it becomes clear that some of the Prophet's wives (s.a.w.) not only distressed him with their words, but they also lacked discretion, which is one of the most important qualities of a faithful spouse. However, in contrast, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) conduct toward them, despite all of this, was so magnanimous that he was not even willing to confront his wife with the entire secret she

had disclosed, but only alluded to part of it. Thus, in a hadith from the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.), we read:

"No generous person has ever investigated thoroughly, for God says: 'He made known part of it and avoided part of it.'"[5]

Then, addressing the two who were involved in the aforementioned plot, He says:

"If the two of you repent to God, then indeed your hearts have deviated."

"And if you cooperate against him, then indeed God is his protector, as are Gabriel and the righteous among the believers, and furthermore, the angels are his supporters."

This expression shows the extent to which this incident negatively affected the pure heart of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and his great spirit, to the point that God came to his defense, and although His own power is sufficient in every respect, He also declares the support of Gabriel, the righteous believers, and other angels.[6]

Who is the Righteous Among the Believers?

What deserves attention and examination in the aforementioned verse is this: who is meant by "the righteous among the believers" (*ṣāliḥ al-mu'minīn*)? Is a specific person intended, or does this expression include all believers who perform righteous deeds?

Without doubt, "the righteous among the believers" (*ṣāliḥ al-mu'minīn*) has a broad literal meaning that includes all righteous, God-fearing, and perfect believers in faith. Although the word "righteous" (*ṣāliḥ*) here is singular, not plural, since it has a generic meaning, universality can be understood from it. However, "the righteous among the believers" undoubtedly has a most perfect and complete exemplar, and numerous narrations indicate that this perfect individual is Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.). Many Sunni scholars have also reported this in their books, including:

1- 'Allāma Tha'labī[7]

2- 'Allāma Ganjī in *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*[8]

3- Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī[9]

4- Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī[10]

5- Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*[11]

6- Ālūsī in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*[12]

7- Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī in *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*[13]

8- 'Allāma Bursawī in *Rūḥ al-Bayān*[14]

9- Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Ṣawā'iq*[15]

10- 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Muttaqī in *Kanz al-'Ummāl*[16]

Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī al-Ḥanafī alone narrates "eighteen traditions" through different chains of transmission under this noble verse, indicating that "the righteous among the believers" refers to "Ali ibn Abi Talib." Consider three of these traditions:

1- Asmā' bint 'Umays says: I heard the Prophet (s.a.w.) say:

"The righteous among the believers is Ali ibn Abi Talib."[17]

2- Ibn 'Abbās narrates from the Prophet of God (s.a.w.) that he said concerning Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.): "He is the righteous among the believers" (*ṣāliḥ al-mu'minīn*)[18]

3- 'Ammār Yāsir says: I heard from Ali (a.s.) who said: The Prophet (s.a.w.) called me and said:

"Shall I not give you glad tidings? I said: Yes, O Messenger of God, and you have always brought glad tidings of good! He said: God has revealed a verse of the Qur'an about you. I said: What is it, O Messenger of God? He said: You have been paired with Gabriel, then he recited: 'and Gabriel and the righteous among the believers...'"[19]

In short, there are numerous traditions on this subject. The well-known exegete Baḥrānī in his exegesis *al-Burhān*, after mentioning a tradition on this topic, narrates from Muḥammad ibn 'Abbās that he collected 52 traditions on this subject from both Shi'i and Sunni sources, and then proceeds to quote some of these traditions![20]

The result is that, after God and Gabriel the Trustworthy, the greatest companion and helper of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) throughout his life was Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.).

Therefore, who other than him could be worthy of the caliphate and succession to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.)? Do these traditions not prove that he was the most excellent of the community (*umma*) and the most superior of creation after the Prophet (s.a.w.)? If this is

so, and if God were to appoint someone as the successor to His Prophet, would His wisdom allow for anyone else to be appointed while Ali (a.s.) was present! And if people and the intellectuals were to choose someone for this important purpose, would their intellect and reason allow them to seek out and choose another while there existed someone who, after God and Gabriel, was the greatest companion and helper of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.)? Indeed, during the lifetime of the Prophet (s.a.w.), Ali (a.s.) was shoulder to shoulder with him as the companion and helper of the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) in all scenes of life, and he is more worthy than anyone else for succession.

Message of the Verse

The "righteous among the believers" (*ṣāliḥ al-mu'minīn*) carries a message of "faith," "righteousness," and "virtue" for all. This noble verse advises all followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) not to stop at the boundary of "accepting Islam," but rather to deepen their Islam and reach the stage of "faith," and by strengthening their faith, to manifest it from their hearts and inner being to their limbs and organs, and through performing "righteous and worthy" deeds become believers who perform righteous deeds.

1. *Maghāfīr* was a gum that exuded from one of the Hijaz trees called *'arfaṭ* (on the meter of Hurmuz) and had an unpleasant smell.

2. The original hadith is narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 6/194, and the explanations in parentheses are taken from other books (*Tafsīr Namūna*, 24/2 and 271).

3. *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* and other exegeses, under the verses under discussion (as quoted from *Tafsīr Namūna*, 24/272).

4. *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*, 8/163.

5. *Al-Mīzān*, 19/338.

6. Ibn 'Abbās says: I asked 'Umar who were the two wives of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who conspired against him? 'Umar said: They were

Ḥafṣa and ʿĀʾisha. He then added: By Allah, during the time of ignorance, we did not give any consideration to women until Allah revealed verses about them and established rights for them (and they became emboldened). (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 6/195, as quoted in *Tafsīr Namūna*, 24/277).

7. *Al-ʿUmda* by Ibn Baṭrīq, p. 152 (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/311).
8. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, p. 53 (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/311).
9. *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, p. 53 (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/311).
10. *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 8/291 (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/312).
11. *Al-Tadhkira*, p. 267 (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/312).
12. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 6/244 (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/313).
13. *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, 28/135 (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/314).
14. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/254 onwards.
15. *Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 10/53.
16. As quoted in *Payām-i Qurʾān*, 9/299.
17. Ibid.
18. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/258, hadith 987.
19. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/259, hadith 989.
20. *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, 4/353.

22

YOU ARE ONLY A WARNER, AND THERE IS A GUIDE FOR EVERY PEOPLE

"The faithless say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people."

(*Sūrat al-Ra'd*, verse 7)

Overview of the Discussion

This noble verse is also one of the verses concerning the guardianship (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.). Scholars and exegetes have presented various discussions about it. From the traditions, we understand that not only is the guardianship of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) established, but also the Imamate and guardianship of all the Imams (a.s.) is proven according to this verse; the explanation of this matter will follow.

Explanation and Commentary

Yet Another Excuse!

"The faithless say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'"

"You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people."

The Relationship Between the Beginning and End of the Verse

Question: Is there a suitable relationship between the beginning and end of this noble verse? In response to the request and question of the polytheists and disbelievers, who were demanding a miracle from the Prophet of Islam, is this statement: "You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people" an appropriate answer?

Answer: To answer this question and find the connection between the beginning and end - or in simpler terms, between the opening and closing of the verse - we must look at other verses of the Qur'an that address the disbelievers' demands for miracles.

God states in verses 90-93 of *Sūrat al-Isrā'* through the words of the polytheists:

"And they said: 'We will never believe in you...'" - Then they demanded seven miracles, saying that miracles you bring without our request and desire are of no benefit to us. Rather, we will only believe if you show us miracles that suit our taste and desire.

From the apparent meaning of the verse, we understand that the seven miracles mentioned in these verses were not demanded by all of them together, but rather each of them requested one of these miracles.[1]

1- "Until you make a spring gush forth from the earth for us" - The first miracle they requested was that the Prophet (s.a.w.) should, as a divine miracle, make a spring of water appear in that dry, scorching, barren land of the Hijaz - a gushing spring that would fountain

forth so that people could use it for drinking, for their animals, and for agriculture.

2- "Or until you have a garden of date palms and vines and you make streams gush through it."

3- "Or until you cause the sky to fall in fragments upon us, just as you would aver."

4- "Or until you bring God and the angels [right] in front of us."

When a person becomes obstinate, they do not pay sufficient attention to their own words. They did not say "Take us to God and the angels"; rather, they demanded that the Prophet (s.a.w.) bring God and the angels before them!

5- "Or until you have a house of gold."

6- "Or you ascend into the sky."

7- "And we will not believe your ascension until you bring down for us a book that we may read."

As you have observed, of the seven miracles mentioned, some pertained to construction and development while others entailed the destruction and annihilation of those who demanded them. The third category consisted of nothing but irrational and impossible demands, while the fourth category amounted to mere excuses and obstinacy rather than genuine requests for miracles.

If the prophets had submitted to people's demands for miracles, some ignorant, obstinate, and excuse-making individuals would have demanded a new miracle every day, making a mockery of religion and God's prophet. For this reason, God gave each prophet a miracle or miracles that served as clear and evident signs of his prophethood and message, while paying no attention to the demands of obstinate individuals.

With this lengthy introduction in mind, let us return to the noble verse: "The disbelievers said: Why has no sign (and miracle) been sent down to the Prophet of Islam from his Lord?"

In response to this question, we say: A miracle was sent down to the Prophet of Islam that all jinn and humans are incapable and powerless to produce anything like it. In verse 88 of the same chapter we read:

"Say, 'Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another.'"

When the Prophet (s.a.w.) has brought a miracle from God that no one has the power to produce anything like it, and has additionally brought other miracles, demanding further miracles is merely making excuses. For this reason, God responds to those who demanded miracles by saying: "O Our Prophet! You are a warner (*mundhir*) and not the one who decides about bringing miracles! We are the ones who make decisions about this, and every people and nation has a guide (*hādī*)."

Thus, the relationship between the beginning and end of the verse becomes clear.

Who are the "Warner" (*Mundhir*) and the "Guide" (*Hādī*)?

To explain these two terms, which are key to understanding the verse, we can discuss this through two approaches:

First Approach: Explaining the Verse Without Reference to Traditions

Does the verse mean that the Prophet is both a "warner" (*mundhir*) and a "guide" (*hādī*)? Or is he only a "warner," while the "guide" is someone else?

There are three views regarding the explanation of these two terms:

1- Some believe that both terms refer to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), that he is both the warner and the guide, and there is no reference to another person.

However, in fairness, this view is not correct and does not align with the apparent meaning of the verse. It is inconsistent with the eloquence, rhetoric, and literary style of the verse, because if both terms referred to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), eloquence and rhetoric would have required the verse to be structured differently:

"You are a warner and guide for every people."

Instead of expressing "guide" (*hādī*) in a separate, independent sentence. Therefore, the apparent meaning of the verse indicates that the "guide" (*hādī*) refers to someone other than the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.). Through careful examination of the verse and other contextual evidence, we must clarify who "he" is.

2- Another group believes that "warner" (*mundhir*) refers to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) and "guide" (*hādī*) refers to God; the Prophet is the warner of people and God is the guide of every nation and people.

However, in response, we must say: This view also does not align with the apparent meaning of the noble verse; because the word "guide" (*hādī*) in Arabic literary terminology is "indefinite" (*nakira*), while God is the most well-known of all known things and more recognizable than anything and anyone. Furthermore, the apparent meaning of the verse indicates that different peoples have multiple "guides," not that the guide for all peoples is one person. Therefore, the above exegesis is also inconsistent with the apparent meaning of the verse.

3- The third exegesis is that the guide is someone other than God and His Prophet.

Are the scholars and learned people of each nation and community intended by the noble verse? No! The word "guide" (*hādī*) cannot be explained as referring to the scholars of every nation and community in every era and time, because the word "guide" (*hādī*), as mentioned before, is "indefinite" (*nakira*) and an indefinite noun indicates singularity; meaning there is one guide for every nation and community. Who truly is that guide for the Islamic community?

Considering all the previous discussions, we can translate the noble verse as follows:

"O Prophet! You are the warner and the legislator of the sacred religion of Islam and its founder, and for every religion and creed there is a guide, who will serve as the protector, guardian, and continuator of the religion and the guide of the people."

On the other hand, the unity of context requires that just as the

Prophet and the "warner" (*mundhir*) are appointed and designated by God, the "guide" (*hādī*) must also be divinely appointed.

Therefore, the "guide" (*hādī*) is someone other than God, the Prophet, and the scholars of each community, and must be appointed by God.

Thirdly, the only person who is said to have been explicitly designated for leadership and authority (*wilāya* and *imāma*) by the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) is Ali (a.s.), and no such claim exists for anyone else, even among Sunni scholars. Therefore, if we say: "The warner and founder of Islam is the Prophet (s.a.w.), and the guide, leader and authority of the Muslims is Ali (a.s.), who was appointed by God through the Prophet," this would be consistent with the verse.

Second Approach: Exegesis of the Verse Through Traditions

There are numerous traditions explaining and commenting on this noble verse, of which we will mention five examples. We will cite three traditions from Sunni sources and books, one tradition from Shi'i sources and books, and the fifth tradition appears in the sources of both groups.

1- Ibn ʿAbbās, who is one of the narrators of these traditions, says:

"When the verse 'You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people' was revealed, the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) placed his hand on his chest and said: 'I am the warner and for every people there is a guide,' and he gestured with his hand to Ali's shoulder, saying: 'You are the guide, O Ali. Through you, those who seek guidance after me will be guided.'"[2]

When the verse "You are only a warner..." was revealed to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), he placed his hand on his blessed chest and said: "I am the warner, I am the founder and legislator of the religion of Islam, and every people has a guide." Then he placed his hand on Ali's (a.s.) shoulder and said: "O Ali, you are the guide (meant by *hādī*) in this verse; those who seek guidance will be guided through you (they will be guided through contemplating your words, traditions, conduct, and character)."

The above tradition, which is narrated from Sunni sources, explicitly states that the "guide" (*hādī*) refers to Ali (a.s.).

2- In the books *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*[3] and *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Abū Barza al-Aslamī as follows:

"I heard the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) recite 'You are only a warner' while placing his hand on his own chest, then he placed it on Ali's chest and said 'and there is a guide for every people.'"[4]

(Abū Barza al-Aslamī says:) He heard the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) recite "You are only a warner," then the Prophet placed his hand on his blessed chest (meaning "I am the warner"), then placed his hand on Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib's (a.s.) chest and said: "and there is a guide for every people" (meaning Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib is the guide).

This tradition, which is also narrated from two authoritative Sunni books and is reported by someone other than Ibn ʿAbbās, explicitly explains the "guide" (*hādī*) as referring to Ali (a.s.).

3- In the book *Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, which is a well-known and famous book among Sunnis, a tradition explaining this verse is narrated from Ali (a.s.) himself:

"From Ali: 'You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people.' Ali said: 'The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) is the warner, and I am the guide.'"[5]

Ali (a.s.) said regarding the verse "You are only a warner...": "The Prophet (s.a.w.) is the warner and I am the guide (*hādī*)."

According to this tradition, which is narrated from another well-known Sunni book, Ali (a.s.) is the guide (*hādī*).

Question: We know that if someone narrates a tradition in praise of themselves, such a tradition is not accepted. So how can the above tradition, which is narrated from Ali (a.s.) himself, be used as evidence?

Answer: This principle applies to non-infallibles, but not to the infallibles (a.s.), for whom error, mistake, and sin are inconceivable. According to Shi'i belief, Ali is infallible, and according to Sunni belief, the words, sayings, and traditions of all companions, one of whom is Ali (a.s.), constitute legal proof. Therefore, the above objection is not valid according to either school of thought.

4- The fourth tradition, which appears in both general and specific sources, is extremely interesting and has a very profound meaning. Sunni scholars have narrated it from Ibn 'Abbās[6] and Shi'i scholars have narrated it from Ibn Mas'ūd. In other words, both Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd heard this tradition from the Prophet and transmitted it to us.

According to this tradition, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"When I was taken up to heaven, there was no close angel or messenger prophet between me and my Lord, and no request I made but He gave me better than it. Then these words fell upon my hearing: 'You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people.' So I said: 'My God, I am the warner, but who is the guide?' He said: 'O Muhammad, that is Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, the ultimate goal of the guided ones, the leader of the God-conscious, the commander of those with bright, radiant faces ,[7] and the one who guides those from your community to Paradise through My mercy.'"[8]

When I ascended to heaven (at one stage of this journey), I reached a place where all intermediaries were removed - neither the close angels (not Gabriel, not the Trustworthy Spirit, not Michael) nor any prophet among the prophets (in short, there was no one except me and God, and I was receiving matters directly from God). In that high station of divine proximity, I made no request from God but that He granted me better than it. (In this station of divine proximity and in this special, exceptional state) I heard a voice saying: "You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people." I said: "My Lord! I am the warner, but who is the guide?" God said: "The guide is Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib." (Then God Most High, in that station of proximity and special status, began to describe Ali and enumerated three beautiful and meaningful qualities for him:) "He is the ultimate destination of the guided ones (meaning those who wish to traverse the path of proximity to God must walk towards Ali); he is the leader and guide of the God-conscious; and he is the leader of those of bright countenance, honor, and dignity in human society; the one through whose leadership (*wilāya*) lies the path to Paradise."

This beautiful tradition clearly explains the application of the

verse to the blessed existence of the Prophet and Ali (a.s.), even in the heavens.

Messages of the Verse of Leadership and Warning

This noble verse is not merely concerned with a doctrinal and historical discussion, but contains two messages for Muslims and Shi'is of our time that serve as a guide for Muslims of our era and all eras, and acting upon them will solve some of their problems. Consider these two messages:

1. Prejudice and Obstinacy: Two Major Obstacles!

The first message of the verse, which is derived from its beginning portion, is that one cannot achieve anything through prejudice and obstinacy. If someone wishes to understand the truth, they must submit to it and avoid personal interpretation (*tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*), preconceptions, and following their own desires. For this reason, the verses of the Qur'an and traditions have prohibited "disputation with falsehood" (*jidāl bi-l-bāṭil*) and have predicted a severe and dangerous outcome for those who engage in false disputation.

"And among the people are those who dispute about God without knowledge and follow every rebellious devil."

In this noble verse, disputation with falsehood is mentioned alongside following the rebellious devil, meaning those who engage in blind, illogical, and prejudiced arguments through disputation are companions of the "rebellious devil" (*shayṭān marīd*).

In Islamic traditions, one of the major veils preventing certainty and attaining truth is precisely these spiteful, excuse-making, empty words and false disputation. In a tradition from the Prophet (s.a.w.), we read:

"No people went astray except that they insisted upon disputation" [9]

Question: Why does the root of all misguidance return to false disputation?

Answer: Because if a person submits to truth, there are many callers to truth in the world and they are easily guided. Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (a.s.), in response to Hārūn al-Rashīd who had asked him for advice, said:

"There is nothing that your eyes see except that there is advice in it" [10]

This means the earth with all its creatures is advice; the sky with all it contains is advice; times and places are advice; bitter and sweet events are advice; yes, all of these are advice, provided that we have an open eye and a listening ear.

Therefore, truth is not hidden from truth-seekers and those who desire truth, and those who go astray have their own problems and suffer from the illness of false disputation.

It is clear that in what has been said, there is no difference between religious, moral, political, and other such discussions. The source of media conflicts in political matters is also this same issue - that they do not want to submit to truth, and everyone wants to impose their own prejudgments. Otherwise, discerning truth in political matters is not so difficult, nor is the sun of truth so hidden. However, when prejudices and personal and partisan interests enter the picture, truth and reality become concealed!

In another tradition narrated from the blessed presence of the Master of the God-fearing, the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), we read:

"Disputation (*jadal*) in religion corrupts certainty"[11]

This is because when someone becomes disputatious, gradually to fulfill their heart's desires, they present whatever their base desires want in the guise of religion and under the title of new readings and interpretations!

In summary, disputation with falsehood is strongly prohibited in the verses and traditions.

However, disputation with truth and logical, peaceful discussions, where both parties in the discussion are seeking to clarify and reach the truth, and neither intends to seek superiority over the other, is not only permissible but has been commanded by God.

"And dispute with them in a manner that is best"

2. The Guided One's Following of the Guide

The second message of the verse, which can be understood from its final part, is that if Ali (a.s.) has been presented as the "guide" (*hādī*) of Muslims and Muslims seek guidance, they must follow Ali.

Ali's ethics, Ali's behavior, Ali's speech, Ali's passionate sermons, Ali's letters filled with profound teachings, Ali's wise short sayings, Ali's life history full of lessons, Ali's attractive social etiquette, Ali's strong and powerful leadership, Ali's kind and good manner of dealing with individuals, tribes and domestic and foreign personalities, Ali's passionate guidance and direction, and especially Ali's simple lifestyle should be the model and example for all Muslims.

Indeed, how great is the distance between our lives and the life of our master, whose leadership we claim to follow! How simple and inexpensive was Ali's food! How simple was Ali's clothing at the height of power and governance! Could luxuries ever enslave Ali, even at the peak of his authority and power! Even Ali's burial ceremony and post-death gatherings were simple. But unfortunately, some who claim to be Shi'i followers of Ali (a.s.) are not only completely surrounded by worldly glitter in their lives and enslaved by ceremonial living, but their post-death ceremonies are also full of pomp and show, to the extent that they bear no resemblance to mourning and memorial gatherings!

And in some of these gatherings, sometimes millions of tomans are spent!

A story was related to me that was encouraging from one perspective and concerning from another:

A person passes away and their survivors decide to spend the costs of memorial gatherings and ceremonies on charitable causes. They estimate the costs to be around five million tomans! The deceased's survivors decide that instead of holding memorial ceremonies and spending the aforementioned amount on those cere-

monies, they will provide dowries for ten marriageable girls from needy families.

This news is concerning because ceremonial customs have so thoroughly pervaded our lives that the cost of memorial gatherings has become this heavy and excessive. Yet it is encouraging because the survivors of this deceased person took such a wise initiative and spent that large sum on a charitable cause.

Indeed, what is wrong with carrying out such important work instead of engaging in those fruitless ceremonies?

Dear readers! Providing the means for marriage for young people in need of marriage is not only the responsibility of their parents, but according to the Qur'an:

"Marry off those who are single among you and the upright among your male slaves and your female slaves"[12]

This is a general duty that falls upon all people. Not only in the matter of marriage, but we must also assist young people with their other problems and difficulties, such as unemployment, which is a cause of many corruptions, housing problems, education problems, and the like.

In the year of Imam Ali (a.s.), not only must individual members of society, inspired by Ali's (a.s.) simple life, free themselves from the quagmire of ceremonial living and worldly glitter and move toward a simple and pure life, but the Islamic government must also, in addition to preparing such a cultural and social environment for the general public, begin this sacred practice in its own institutions.

Perhaps by rectifying this social and administrative problem, an important part of administrative corruption, economic deadlocks, and financial dependencies on other countries - who are certainly more concerned with their own interests than our welfare - will be resolved through the blessing of that honorable leader of the Islamic society; we hope for such a day.

We ask God to grant us attentive ears to hear and understand these important messages of divine verses, and then to grant all of us the success to act upon them and benefit from their fruits. Amen, O Lord of the Worlds.

. . .

1. For detailed circumstances of the revelation of these verses, please refer to *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 12/279.

2. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4/45.

3. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/298.

4. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4/45.

5. *Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 3/129.

6. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/296.

7. The phrase "qā'id ghurr al-muḥajjalīn" which appears in several other narrations means: "qā'id" means leader, guide and imam, and "ghurr" is the plural of "agharr" meaning white, bright and luminous, referring to people with bright faces who are called "agharr". As for "muḥajjal", it is derived from "ḥajal" in the language, and "ḥajal" refers to "white partridge", then it was applied to "white horses" and later expanded to refer to honorable, distinguished people who shine in society. Therefore, the meaning of the above phrase is: "Leader of the honorable and distinguished bright-faced ones in human society."

8. *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī*, 78.

9. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 2/138.

10. *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, chapter 4120, hadith 21711.

11. *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, chapter 492, hadith 2285.

12. Qur'ān, 24:32

23

INDEED THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH AND DO RIGHTEOUS DEEDS—IT IS THEY WHO ARE THE BEST OF CREATURES

"Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds—it is they who are the best of creatures. Their reward, near their Lord, is the Gardens of Eden, with streams running in them, to remain in them forever. God is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. That is for those who fear their Lord."

(Sūrat al-Bayyina, verses 7 and 8)[1]

Overview of the Discussion

This verse is also one of the verses concerning the authority (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.), and with special subtlety indicates his authority and leadership (*imāma*). Unlike the previous verses, there is not much disagreement about this verse, but the method of deriving evidence from it for authority and leadership is very precise and subtle, which will be explained.

Explanation and Exegesis

The Best and Worst of Creation!

To clearly understand the meaning of the verse about the best of creation (*khayr al-bariyya*), we must begin with verse six of *Sūrat al-Bayyina*:

"Indeed the faithless from among the People of the Book and the polytheists will be in the fire of hell, to remain in it [forever]."

This means that the Jews and Christians who did not accept Islam, as well as the polytheists and idol-worshippers, will all be placed in the fire of hell and will remain there forever.

"It is they who are the worst of creatures."

And for this reason, they remain eternally in the fire. This statement appears to be the reasoning for their eternal stay in hellfire![2]

From the verses preceding this one, we understand that these are not ordinary or common disbelievers, but rather those who, even after the coming of clear evidence (*bayyina*), the completion of proof (*hujja*), and the attainment of knowledge and certainty about the truth of Islam, still opposed and persisted in their stubbornness, knowingly showing enmity towards truth and justice. Therefore, not every disbeliever among the polytheists and People of the Book falls under this verse, even if they followed the path of disbelief due to ignorance.

After introducing the worst of creatures in the above verse, the next verse proceeds to introduce the best of creatures. Consider:

"Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds—it is they who are the best of creatures."

Three qualities and characteristics are mentioned for the best of God's creatures:

1. "Those who have faith" - Their first characteristic is faith in God, the Prophet, the Day of Resurrection, and the world after death. Therefore, polytheists and all those who have chosen a religion other than Islam are excluded from the scope of this verse.

2."And do righteous deeds" - The second characteristic of the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) is that they perform righteous deeds, and their faith and beliefs are manifested in their actions and conduct.

"Righteous deeds"[3] has a broad meaning; its simplest form, according to what is mentioned in the narrations, is removing obstacles from the path of Muslims. If someone sees an obstacle in people's way and removes it, this is a type of righteous deed - "removing harmful objects from the path" - and the highest form of righteous deed is accepting the true religion (Islam) - "the highest of which is testifying that there is no god but God".[4]

In summary, the second characteristic of the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) is performing righteous deeds.

1."That is for those who fear their Lord" - The third characteristic of the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) is the "station of fear" (*maqām khashya*).

The best of creatures are those who, in addition to "faith" and "righteous deeds," have also attained the "station of fear."

Question: Is "fear" (*khashya*) something beyond "faith" and "righteous deeds"?

Answer: Yes, fear is something more than faith and righteous deeds, and it apparently means having a sense of responsibility. Sometimes faith and righteous deeds exist, but they do not stem from a sense of responsibility; rather, they are acquired through habit or the type of family and environmental upbringing. However, sometimes these two stages are achieved based on a sense of responsibility! Such a person feels responsible in the face of different people and various events and acts accordingly.

The conclusion is that the "best of creatures" possess three characteristics: "faith," "righteous deeds," and "sense of responsibility."

After introducing the "best of creatures" and explaining their characteristics and qualities, it proceeds to describe their reward and recompense:

"Their reward with their Lord will be gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow" - The reward of the "best of creatures" in

the hereafter includes both material and spiritual rewards, because humans themselves are composed of body and soul, with the body seeking material rewards and the soul yearning for spiritual rewards.

As for their material reward, it consists of gardens of paradise where water flows[5] continuously beneath their trees and never ceases.

There are two types of gardens:

1.Gardens where water is supplied from outside and watered periodically according to schedule, but water does not continuously flow beneath their trees.

2.Gardens that have their own water source with streams constantly flowing beneath their trees. Undoubtedly, such gardens possess a special freshness, splendor, and grandeur, and there is no fear of their trees withering. The gardens of paradise described in the noble verse are of the second type and are eternally lush and verdant.

"Abiding therein forever" - Just as the disbelievers among the People of the Book and the polytheists, who knowingly rejected the true religion out of obstinacy and stubbornness, will remain eternally in hell, the believers who possess a sense of responsibility and perform righteous deeds will dwell eternally in paradise.

"God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him" - This phrase refers to the spiritual reward of the believers; their spiritual reward is that God bestows so many blessings upon them that they become content and satisfied, and on the other hand, God's favor toward them is so abundant that He too is pleased with them.

Oh, what a station! Can there be found a blessing greater than this!

In conclusion, the above three verses explain both the characteristics of the "worst of creatures" (*sharr al-bariyya*) and their punishment and retribution in the hereafter, as well as the qualities and characteristics of the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) and their reward and recompense in the hereafter.

The Best of Creatures in the Narrations

Question: Is this noble verse general or specific?

In other words, does the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) include all believers who perform righteous deeds, or does it encompass a specific group?

Answer: The answer to this question must be sought in the narrations transmitted from the Infallibles (a.s.) regarding the occasion of revelation of the above verses; consider these narrations:

According to numerous narrations found in both Shi'i and Sunni books, the Prophet (s.a.w.) identified Ali and his followers as the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*).

These narrations appear in various books, including:

1.Shawāhid al-Tanzīl by Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī[6]

2.Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqa by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī[7]

3.Al-Durr al-Manthūr by al-Suyūṭī[8]

4.Nūr al-Abṣār by Muḥammad al-Shablanji[9]

5.Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī[10]

6.Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī by al-Ālūsī[11]

7.Manāqib al-Khwārazmī[12]

8.Fatḥ al-Ghadīr by 'Allāma al-Shawkānī[13]

In *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl* alone, more than twenty narrations are reported concerning the verse about the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*). We have selected three of these narrations. Consider these narrations:

A. Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh al-Anṣārī, the well-known companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.), narrates:

We were sitting with the Prophet (s.a.w.) and a group of Muslims near the House of God, the Ka'ba, when suddenly Ali (a.s.) appeared in the distance. When the Prophet's (s.a.w.) eyes fell upon Ali (a.s.), he looked at his companions and said:

"My brother has come to you." Then he turned toward the Ka'ba and said, "By the Lord of this structure! Indeed, this man and his followers (*shī'a*) are the successful ones on the Day of Resurrection." Then he turned his face toward us and said:

"By God, he is the first among you in faith in God, the most steadfast in following God's command, the most faithful to God's covenant, the most judicious in God's ruling, the most equitable in distribution, the most just toward the subjects (*ra'iyya*), and the most distinguished in God's sight." Jābir said: Then God revealed: "Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds—it is they who are the best of creatures." Thereafter, whenever Ali would approach, the companions of Muhammad would say: "The best of creatures after the Messenger of God has come to you."[14]

From the concluding part of the narration, it can be understood that this tradition was well-known among all Muslims in early Islam; therefore, its transmission was not limited to Ibn 'Abbās, Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, and Abū Barzah.

B. In another narration, Jābir says: When the verse about the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) was revealed, the Prophet (s.a.w.) turned to Ali and said:

"It refers to you and your followers (*shī'a*). You and your followers will come to me [on the Day of Judgment] well-pleased and well-pleasing."[15]

C. Abū Barza al-Aslamī says: When the verse about the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) was revealed, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said to Ali:

"O Ali, it refers to you and your followers (*shī'a*), and our meeting place will be at the Pool (*ḥawḍ*)."[16]

D. Ibn 'Asākir narrates an interesting account regarding the noble verse about the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) from 'Ā'isha. According to this narration, someone asked 'Ā'isha about Ali, and 'Ā'isha (despite not having a good relationship with Ali, and having even ignited the flames of the Battle of the Camel against him) said: "Ali is the best of God's creation, and whoever harbors hatred for Ali in their heart is an unbeliever!"[17]

Therefore, according to the numerous narrations concerning the verse about the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*), it refers to Ali (a.s.).

Question: Al-Ālūsī raises the following question in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*:

If the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) refers to Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (a.s.), does this mean he is superior even to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.)? Since the term "best of creatures" in the verse is absolute and implies that its referent is superior to all human beings?

Answer: If we examine the verse carefully, the answer to this question becomes clear; for as mentioned before, one of the conditions of being the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) was faith—faith in God and the Messenger and other Islamic laws. Therefore, Ali becomes the best of creatures through his belief in God and the Prophet, and how could it be possible that he becomes the best of creatures through his belief in the Prophet's message, and then be superior even to the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself!? This is why in the narration of Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī, which was transmitted through Sunni sources, it is stated that Ali is the best of creatures after the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Another question: What is the relationship between this noble verse and the issue of succession (*khilāfa*), leadership (*imāma*), and authority (*wilāya*) of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.)? Even if the Sunnis accept that, according to the narrations, Ali (a.s.) is the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*), how can this verse be used as evidence for his leadership?

Answer: There is a difference between the Shi'i and Sunni views regarding the method of appointing the Prophet's successor and the successor to the Prophet's successor.

The Shi'i believe that the successor and the successor to the Prophet's successor (s.a.w.) must be appointed and installed by God,[18] so according to the Shi'i view, the appointment of a successor is by divine designation.

The Sunnis, however, believe that the appointment of the Prophet's successor (s.a.w.) is by election and that this matter must be carried out by the people—whoever the people vote for as successor becomes the successor to the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Of course, this difference does not affect this verse, because whether the succession is by election or by divine designation, only Ali (a.s.) is worthy of succession! For if it is by divine designation, as the Shi'i believe,

with the presence of Ali (a.s.), who is the best of creatures and the finest of all creation, the Wise God would not appoint another person; because if He did so, it would not be a wise appointment! And if it is by election, is it permissible to choose another person or persons when the best of people exists? And it is clear that the excuse of people's lack of knowledge about the best of creatures is not acceptable, given the numerous narrations, some of which were discussed in detail, and given Ali's (a.s.) fame among Muslims as the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*)!

With the above explanation, the relationship between the noble verse and the issue of authority and succession has become clear.

Third question: Usually the best is one person, not several people; therefore, how can Ali (a.s.) and his followers all be the best?

Answer: Being the best of creation has a hierarchical order. One person can be at the top of the pyramid of the best, while others are at lower levels, and a third group even lower than them.

Therefore, Ali (a.s.) is at the top of the pyramid of the best, and his followers are at subsequent levels.

The conclusion of all previous discussions is this: the "best of creatures" (*khayr al-bariyya*) - who possess the three characteristics of faith, righteous deeds, and sense of responsibility - are Ali and his followers.

Messages of the Verse about the Best of Creatures

The verse about the best of creatures and the narrations that follow it contain various messages, including:

1. The Islamic Value System

Every religion, denomination, and school is bound by its values. In simpler terms, every school and denomination revolves around a central axis that constitutes that school's value system. Consider these examples:

a.The value system of Pharaoh's tyrannical society, according to

what is stated in verse 51 of *Sūrat al-Zukhruf*, is expressed in Pharaoh's own words:

"And Pharaoh proclaimed amongst his people. He said, 'O my people! Does not the kingdom of Egypt belong to me and these rivers that run at my feet? Do you not perceive?'"

Pharaoh's pride lies in his control over Egypt and his possession of Egypt's government, specifically a despotic and dictatorial government. This is Pharaoh's value system. Therefore, from Pharaoh's and his followers' perspective, good people are rulers and sovereigns, even if they are the most criminal and oppressive individuals! And bad people are those who lack power and authority, even if they possess the best moral qualities! For this reason, Pharaoh objects to the prophethood of Moses (a.s.) by saying:

"Why have no bracelets of gold been cast upon him, nor have the angels come with him as escorts?"[19]

This means that according to Pharaoh's value system, since Moses (a.s.) does not possess wealth, power, and governance, he cannot be God's prophet!

Consequently, the value system of Pharaonic society is based on power, wealth, and adornment.

a.The value system of some other societies and schools is based on having more children and wealth. In verse 35 of *Sūrat Saba'*, we read:

"And they say, 'We have greater wealth and more children, and we will not be punished!'"

Their value system is based on greater human resources and stronger economy. According to this belief, good people are those who have more children and stronger financial means, especially if the children are male. For this reason, during the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyya*), families with more sons were considered fortunate, as the sons could help their fathers in killing and plundering!

In summary, the value system of this group is based on greater human resources and stronger economy.

However, from Islam's perspective, none of the above matters

constitute a value system, although they may be desirable as tools for achieving sacred religious goals.

The Qur'an, in rejecting the value system of the latter group, states:

"It is not your wealth, nor your children, that will bring you close to Us in nearness, except those who have faith and act righteously. It is they for whom there will be a twofold reward for what they did, and they will be secure in lofty abodes."[20]

This verse, while rejecting the value system that revolves around human resources and economy, introduces Islam's value system. "Faith" (*īmān*) and "righteous deeds" (*'amal ṣāliḥ*) are among the elements that constitute Islam's value system, because these are the things that bring a person closer to God - not wealth and children obtained through any means!

In verse 13 of *Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt*, God-consciousness (*taqwā*) is introduced as another pillar of Islam's value system. In this verse, God states:

"O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most Godwary among you. Indeed God is all-knowing, all-aware."

When Islam arrived and the society's value system changed, with faith, righteous deeds, and God-consciousness replacing the values of the Age of Ignorance, a profound transformation occurred. Instead of the Abū Jahls, Abū Lahabs, and Abū Sufyāns, the Islamic society presented to people the Abū Dhars, Salmāns, and Maythams!

The verse about "the best of creatures" (*khayr al-barīyya*) also expresses Islam's value system through "faith" (*īmān*), "righteous deeds" (*'amal ṣāliḥ*), and "sense of responsibility" (*iḥsās mas'ūlīyya*), and identifies the best of creatures according to these criteria. Unfortunately, in today's world, the same value system of the Age of Ignorance (*jāhilīyya*) prevails; those who possess more dollars and liras are introduced as the world's finest! Or those who wield greater economic power, or possess superior military might, are considered

the best! However, none of these factors independently constitute value from Islam's perspective.

2. The Historical Origins of Shi'ism

Some have imagined, or deliberately suggest, that Shi'ism emerged during the Safavid era or afterward, and has no significant historical precedent!

However, a brief study of Islamic works and traditions reveals the falsity of this notion. For instance, in the traditions related to the verse about "the best of creatures," we read that the title "Shi'a" (*shī'a*) was first used by the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) for the followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.). Therefore, the history of Shi'ism is contemporaneous with the history of Islam, and its precedent predates all other Islamic schools of thought.

In light of this, those who, either unknowingly or knowingly and out of obstinacy, raise such baseless accusations and claims, are subject to this Arab poet's verse: "If you do not know, then that is a calamity; and if you do know, then the calamity is even greater."

That is, if these scholars are unaware of the aforementioned traditions, this itself is a calamity (that a scholar should be unaware of such traditions), and if they are aware but deny them out of obstinacy, the calamity is doubled and even greater.

O God! Protect us from baseless prejudices, lest their harmful effects overtake us.

3. What Does Shi'a Mean?

Question: The traditions mentioned in this discussion identified the Shi'a of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), along with him, as the best of God's creation. Given this elevated status of the Shi'a, we want to know: to whom does the term Shi'a refer?

Are we truly Shi'a, and are we included in these traditions?

Answer: To answer this question, we must examine the word "Shi'a" (*shī'a*) from three perspectives:

First, we will examine its linguistic meaning, then look at its usage in the Qur'an, and finally, we will mention some traditions that describe the true Shi'a.

A. Shi'a in Language: The word Shi'a is defined in language as "spreading with power" (*al-intishār ma'a l-qudra*). That is, something that spreads with power and strength to different places is called Shi'a. Therefore, linguistically, Shi'a refers to a widespread, strong, and powerful group.

B. Shi'a in the Qur'an: This word appears in four places in the Qur'an.

One of these verses is about Abraham (a.s.). In verses 83 and 84 of *Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt*, we read:

"Indeed Abraham was among his followers, when he came to his Lord with a sound heart."

In this noble verse, Abraham is introduced as a follower (*shī'a*) of Noah (a.s.), meaning that he continued Noah's path (a.s.). The second verse explains how Abraham succeeded in continuing Noah's path by coming to his Lord with a sound heart .[21]

Another verse in which the word Shi'a appears is verse 15 of *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ*, which relates to the story of Moses (a.s.). It reads:

"[One day] he entered the city at a time when its people dwelt in distraction. He found there two men fighting, this one from among his followers, and that one from his enemies. The one who was from his followers sought his help against him who was from his enemies."

The word Shi'a in this noble verse refers to the followers of Moses (a.s.), and perhaps from this usage we can understand that even before his prophethood, he had trained a group that was organized and united in the path of truth.

Therefore, the word Shi'a in the above verses is used in reference to some prophets and their followers.

C. Shi'a in Traditions: The word "Shi'a" (*shī'a*) is extensively used in traditions. We will be content with three examples in this discussion:

1.One day Ali (a.s.) addressed one of his companions named "Nawf al-Bikālī" saying:

"O Nawf, do you know who my followers (*shī'a*) are?"

Nawf replied: "No, by God."

Then the Imam began to describe the qualities of his followers, saying among other things:

"They are monks by night and lions by day"[22]

1.In another narration, the followers (*shī'a*) are described in this way:

"Our followers (*shī'a*) are the people of four eyes; two eyes in the head and two eyes in the heart"[23]

This means that the followers (*shī'a*) are strong, brave, vigilant, enlightened, understanding, knowledgeable, and comprehending people; not helpless and naive individuals.

1.Someone said to Imam al-Bāqir (a.s.): "Praise be to God, your followers (*shī'a*) are very numerous." The Imam gave him a meaningful look and said: "These people you speak of as our followers (*shī'a*), do they perform these actions?

"Do their wealthy show kindness to their poor? Do their virtuous forgive their wrongdoers? Do they share equally with one another?" I said: "No." He said: "These are not followers (*shī'a*). The followers (*shī'a*) are those who act in this way."[24]

Do the wealthy among these people pay attention to their poor and needy and take care of them? Do the noble and righteous among these people whom you call followers (*shī'a*) forgive the mistakes and errors of wrongdoers and pardon them (or do they punish them many times over and torment them!)? Do they practice equal sharing? Do they divide their good fortune among each other (share their joys with one another)?

When that man heard these characteristics, he became ashamed and gave a negative response. Then the Imam said: Such people are not followers (*shī'a*); a follower (*shī'a*) is one who practices what I have said.

Yes, a follower (*shī'a*) must be a monk by night and a lion by day, an alert, understanding and clever person, who helps the poor and needy, forgives the mistakes of wrongdoers, and shares his joys with others.

. . .

1. The word *bariyya* comes from the root *bar'* meaning creation, hence God is called *Bārī* meaning Creator and creatures are called *bariyya*. Some believe *bariyya* comes from *bary* (like "leaf") meaning "dust", and since creatures are made from dust, they are called *bariyya*. Others have said *bariyya* comes from *baraytu al-qalam* ("I sharpened the pen"), and since creatures take different forms and statures by divine command, they are like pens being shaped in the workshop of creation, hence they are called *bariyya*. *Tafsīr Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/259

2. The expression "These are the worst of creatures" is a striking phrase showing that among all living and non-living beings, none are more rejected than those who, after the truth becomes clear and proof is complete, abandon the straight path and step into misguidance. This is similar to what appears in Qur'ān, 8:22: "Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason." And what appears in Qur'ān, 7:179 which after describing the people of hell with these qualities states: "They are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless." The verse under discussion goes even further than these, as it describes them as the worst of all creation. *Tafsīr Namūna*, 27/207

3. Regarding the importance of "righteous deeds", it suffices to note that this phrase is repeated nearly seventy times in the Holy Qur'ān!

4. *'Awālī al-La'ālī*, 1/431. This narration is also reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book of Faith, Chapter 12, Hadith 58 and *Musnad Aḥmad*, 2/379.

5. The notion of eternity is derived from the word *'adn*, as *'adn* means eternal. The word *ma'dan* (mine) is also derived from this root because mineral objects remain fixed, stable and permanent in it.

6. Al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī al-Nīshābūrī was among the Sunni scholars of Nishapur. Ḥaskān was considered one of the villages of Nishapur at that time. He was a balanced scholar free from prejudice

who attempted to collect all narrations regarding the occasions of revelation of Qur'anic verses in his book.

7. *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqa*, p. 96 (as quoted in *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/261).

8. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 6/379 (as quoted in *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/260).

9. *Nūr al-Abṣār*, p. 70 and 110 (as quoted in *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/261).

10. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 30/171.

11. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 30/207.

12. *Manāqib Khwārazmī*, p. 421, Tehran edition (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/289).

13. *Fatḥ al-Ghadīr*, 5/464, Egypt edition (as quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/291).

14. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/362.

15. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/360.

16. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 2/359.

17. As quoted in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 3/388.

18. Because as previously explained, the successor of the Prophet (s.a.w.) must be infallible (*ma'ṣūm*), and infallibility can only be determined by God. Therefore, God must introduce an infallible person as caliph.

19. Qur'ān, 43:53.

20. Qur'ān, 34:37

21. The narrations define a sound heart (*qalb salīm*) as one in which there is nothing but God; meaning that everything else should be desired for God's sake - wife, children, wealth, status, health, security, and in short everything should be desired for greater proximity to God. If any of these acquire independent value and take root in the heart, then that heart is no longer sound! The term "sound heart" (*qalb salīm*) appears twice in the Holy Qur'ān, once in verse 89 of *Sūrat al-Shu'arā'* and again in verse 84 of *Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt*. For more details about the "sound heart" (*qalb salīm*), refer to *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 15/273 and 19/87 onwards.

22. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 75/28

23. *Al-Kāfī*, 8/215

24. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 71/313

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... AND HE WHO IS GIVEN WISDOM, IS CERTAINLY GIVEN AN ABUNDANT GOOD

"He gives wisdom to whomever He wishes, and he who is given wisdom, is certainly given an abundant good. But none takes admonition except those who possess intellect."

(*Sūrat al-Baqara*, verse 269)

Overview of the Discussion

Without doubt, Islam's share in promoting and encouraging people toward knowledge and learning is greater than all other divine religions. Therefore, if we call Islam the religion of "knowledge and learning," we have not spoken in exaggeration. The verse under discussion is among those verses that describes "wisdom and knowledge" as "abundant good" (*khayr kathīr*). How this noble verse relates to the virtues of Ali (a.s.) will become clear in the upcoming discussions. We ask God to place us among those who possess intellect who understand these truths. Amen, O Lord of the worlds.

Explanation and Exegesis

Wisdom, an Abundant Good!

"He gives wisdom to whomever He wishes" - many meanings have been mentioned for "wisdom" (*hikma*), such as: "knowledge and understanding of the secrets of existence"; "awareness of the truths of the Qur'an"; "reaching truth in speech and action"; and ultimately "knowledge and recognition of God" .[1] All these meanings are encompassed within one broad definition.

Since the previous verse (*Sūrat al-Baqara*, verse 268) speaks of God promising forgiveness and blessing in return for charitable spending, while Satan instills the fear of poverty in the human heart, this verse points to the truth that only "wisdom" (*hikma*) can distinguish between these two pulls - the "divine" and the "satanic" - and deliver one from misleading temptations.

Furthermore, the phrase "whomever He wishes" (*man yashā'*) does not mean that wisdom and knowledge are given arbitrarily to this person or that. Rather, God's will and intention are always intertwined with wisdom.

That is, He grants it to whoever He deems worthy, and whoever has the capacity is quenched from this pure, life-giving spring.

"And he who is given wisdom is certainly given an abundant good" - although God is the bestower of wisdom, His name is not mentioned in this phrase. Instead, it simply states: "whoever is given wisdom has been given abundant good."

This expression seemingly indicates that knowledge and wisdom are inherently good; regardless of their source or origin, there is no difference in their goodness. Notably, this phrase states that whoever is given knowledge and wisdom has been given "abundant good" (*khayr kathīr*), not "absolute good," because absolute good and felicity do not lie in knowledge alone; rather, knowledge is just one of its important factors.

"But none takes admonition except those who possess intellect" -

tadhakkur means "remembrance" and "preservation of knowledge and sciences" within the spirit, while *albāb* is the plural of *lubb*, meaning "core." Since the core of anything is its best and most fundamental part, the intellect is called *lubb*. This phrase states that only those who possess intellect preserve these truths, remember them, and benefit from them. Although everyone (except the insane and deranged) possesses intellect, not all of them are called "those who possess intellect" (*ulū l-albāb*). Rather, this refers to those who employ their intellect and reason, and who find their way in life by the light of this brilliant lamp.

Ali (a.s.), the Master of Wisdom!

The verse about wisdom indicates that "whoever is given wisdom has been given abundant good." However, regarding who has been given wisdom, nothing specific can be derived from this noble verse. But various traditions have been narrated from both Shi'i and Sunni sources that identify Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (a.s.) as possessing such wisdom. Consider some of these traditions:

1- Al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, the well-known Sunni scholar, narrates from Rabī' ibn Khaytham who said: When they mentioned Ali's (a.s.) name in my presence, I said:

"I did not see them find fault with his judgment, while God says: 'And whoever is given wisdom has certainly been given abundant good'"[2]

2- Ibn 'Abbās says that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"Whoever wishes to look at Abraham in his forbearance, at Noah in his wisdom, and at Joseph in his sociability, let him look at Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib"[3]

This same tradition has been narrated in another form from Ibn al-Ḥamrā', who says:

We were with the Prophet (s.a.w.) when Ali (a.s.) came toward us. The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said:

"Whoever would be pleased to look at Adam in his knowledge,

Noah in his understanding, and Abraham in his friendship [with God], let him look at Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib"[4]

One who would be pleased to look at Adam (a.s.) in his knowledge, at Noah (a.s.) in his understanding, and at Abraham (a.s.) in his station as God's friend (*khalīl Allāh*), let him look at Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (a.s.) (in whom all these qualities are combined).

3- In another tradition from Ibn ʿAbbās, we read that he said:

I was with the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) when he was asked about Ali (a.s.), and he said:

"Wisdom was divided into ten parts, and Ali was given nine parts while the people were given one part"[5]

These expressions clearly show that in the Islamic community after the Prophet (s.a.w.), no one reached the level of Ali (a.s.) in knowledge, learning, and wisdom. And since knowledge and wisdom are the most important pillars of the Imamate (*imāma*), he was the most worthy individual for the Imamate and succession after the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

The Scope of Ali's (a.s.) Knowledge and Learning

The breadth of Ali's (a.s.) knowledge and learning is so vast, and the radiance of his light of knowledge so lofty and bright, that even his opponents do not deny it. In fact, they have accepted him in practice as a scholarly authority, and during the caliphate of the three caliphs and the long period of bitter silence, they would turn to him when faced with scholarly impasses. There is much to say on this topic; we will content ourselves with presenting a few examples:

The Scholarly Authority of Imam Ali (a.s.)

1. Imam Ali (a.s.) preserves the knowledge of the Prophet (s.a.w.)

Anas ibn Mālik, the personal servant of the Prophet (s.a.w.), narrates that the Prophet addressed Ali (a.s.) saying:

"You will clarify for my community what they differ about after me." [6]

One of the important duties of the Imamate and leadership (*wilāya*) is safeguarding the Qur'an and the treasuries of knowledge of the Prophet (s.a.w.), correctly transmitting them to scholars and learned individuals, and explaining the differences that arise within the Muslim community (*umma*). The importance of this duty becomes clear when we realize that many conquerors who were victorious over great nations on the battlefields were nevertheless defeated by their culture and were compelled to promote the culture of the conquered nations! Just as the Mongols, though they overcame the Muslims, were so thoroughly conquered by the Qur'an and Islam that not only did they become Muslims themselves, but they became promoters of Islam.

After the passing of the Prophet (s.a.w.), Imam Ali (a.s.) devoted himself to this important matter (the culture of Islam). He first undertook the compilation of the Qur'an and swore that he would not put on his cloak or leave his house except for prayer until he had written the Qur'an .[7] Then, based on what he had learned from the Prophet (s.a.w.) regarding the abrogating and abrogated verses (*nāsikh wa mansūkh*), the clear and ambiguous verses (*muḥkam wa mutashābih*), and the apparent and hidden meanings (*ẓāhir wa bāṭin*) of the Qur'an, he began teaching and explaining it. He trained great students such as Imam Ḥasan (a.s.), Imam Ḥusayn (a.s.), Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn Masʿūd, and others like them, so that they could respond to cultural incursions and doctrinal objections from scholars of conquered lands, meet the jurisprudential and legal needs of jurists, and teach the principles of belief, jurisprudential issues, and other cultural matters of Islam in the best way to newly converted nations.

2. Imam Ali (a.s.): The Gateway to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) City of Knowledge

It is reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"I am the house of wisdom and Ali is its gateway."[8]

I am the house of knowledge and Ali is its door.

It is clear that whoever wishes to enter a house must enter through its door, just as the Qur'an instructs in verse 189 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*: "Come into houses from their doors." Therefore, whoever wishes to access the treasures of knowledge and wisdom of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) must begin with Ali (a.s.), and seek the key to this treasury from him.

3. Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Science of Exegesis (*Tafsīr*)

By consulting the commentaries, it becomes clear that Imam Ali (a.s.) is the leader of the exegetes (*mufassirīn*), as al-Suyūṭī writes: "Among the caliphs, the most narrations have been reported from Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib."[9] And Ibn ʿAbbās, who has so many exegetical traditions, was among Imam Ali's (a.s.) students. When he was asked about the extent of his knowledge compared to his cousin's, he said: "Like a raindrop compared to an ocean!"[10] Imam Ali's (a.s.) students in exegesis each established their own schools of Qur'anic commentary in Mecca, Medina, and Kufa.

4. Imam Ali (a.s.) as the Founder of Grammar (*Naḥw*)

Ali (a.s.), to protect the language of the Qur'an from deviation and distortion, commissioned Abū l-Aswad al-Du'alī to establish the science of grammar under his supervision, and later Abū l-Aswad used this grammatical knowledge to add diacritical marks to the Qur'an.[11]

5. Imam Ali (a.s.) and Theology (*Kalām*)

Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd writes in the introduction to his commentary on *Nahj al-Balāgha*: "The science of theology and doctrines, which is the noblest of sciences, is derived from the words of Imam Ali (a.s.)." [12]

Al-Irbilī writes in *Kashf al-Ghumma*: "The leaders of theological

schools – namely the Ash'arīs, Mu'tazilīs, Shi'is, and Khārijīs – all consider themselves affiliated with him."[13]

6. Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Science of Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*)

Apart from Imami jurists who derive their jurisprudence from Imam Ali (a.s.), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal learned jurisprudence from al-Shāfi'ī, and al-Shāfi'ī learned from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan and Mālik. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan learned jurisprudence from Abū Ḥanīfa, while Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa learned jurisprudence from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.), and Imam al-Ṣādiq's (a.s.) jurisprudence traces back to his grandfather Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.).[14]

7. Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Science of Reality (Esoteric Knowledge) (*'Ilm al-Bāṭin*)

Dr. Abū l-Wafā' al-Ghunaymī al-Taftāzānī, professor at Cairo University and master of the spiritual path, writes in his introduction to the book *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*: "The spiritual masters and followers of the path, such as al-Rifā'ī, al-Badawī, al-Dasūqī, and al-Gīlānī, who are among the most eminent Sunni scholars, trace their spiritual lineage through the Imams of the Prophet's household, and through them to Imam Ali (a.s.), and from him to the Prophet (s.a.w.). This is because the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate' ,[15] and according to the mystics, this indicates a special quality in the science of reality, the science of unveiling (*mukāshafa*), and esoteric knowledge (*'ilm al-bāṭin*) that no one possesses except Imam Ali (a.s.)."

[16] In most Sunni books, there is abundant evidence for Imam Ali's (a.s.) special status in this knowledge. For example, when 'Umar was touching the Black Stone, he declared: "I know you are just a stone that can neither benefit nor harm. Had I not seen the Prophet (s.a.w.) kissing you, I would not have kissed you!" Ali (a.s.) addressed 'Umar saying: "It both benefits and harms. God has entrusted the covenant of the 'world of particles' (*'ālam dharr*)[17] to this stone, and on the Day

of Judgment, it will testify in favor of those who kept their covenant!" When ʿUmar heard this, he said: "May God not keep me alive in a land where you are not present, O Abū l-Ḥasan!"[18]

8. Imam Ali (a.s.) and Succession to the Prophet (s.a.w.)

The previous discussions naturally lead our esteemed readers to this conclusion: "The person who, by the admission of all (supporters and opponents, friends and enemies), was the most knowledgeable, most aware, and most virtuous after the Prophet of God (s.a.w.), is worthy of the caliphate and succession to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.), not anyone else." For this reason, the Prophet of Islam placed these two matters (scholarly authority and succession) together in a section of his eloquent and profound sermon at Ghadīr, saying:

"O people! This is my brother, my successor, the keeper of my knowledge, and my caliph"[19]

Reflection and contemplation on these four characteristics reveal many truths for seekers of truth:

1."My brother" (*akhī*): This term indicates the spiritual brotherhood between the Prophet (s.a.w.) and Ali (a.s.), which is more profound than mere familial ties.

2."My successor" (*waṣiyyī*): This term establishes Ali (a.s.) as the Prophet's successor in all matters except prophethood itself.

3."The keeper of my knowledge" (*wāʿī ʿilmī*): This phrase designates Ali (a.s.) as the vessel and guardian of the Prophet's knowledge.

With such an outstanding personality, would others be qualified for the caliphate?!

1."And my successor over those who believe in me" (*khalīfatī ʿalā man āmana bī*): With this statement, which is in fact the logical conclusion of the three preceding statements, the Prophet (s.a.w.) removes all excuses from those who make excuses and announces, in the clearest terms, the succession and caliphate of Ali (a.s.) to all humanity. He does not suffice with the phrase "my successor" (*khalīfatī*), lest those enslaved by their desires say: "The Prophet meant guardianship of his family and wives, not succession over all

Muslims." Rather, with the best and clearest expressions, he proclaims the leadership (*imāma*) and succession of Ali and his descendants over all Muslims until the Day of Resurrection.

In conclusion, although emphasizing the scholarly authority (*marja'iyya 'ilmiyya*) of the People of the House (a.s.), and at their head Imam Ali (a.s.), is necessary and essential, separating it from the matter of leadership and succession is a great and dangerous mistake with many negative consequences, to which no one can commit themselves.

"And our final prayer is praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds."

The answer: From what was mentioned in Fakhr Rāzī's words, the response to this doubt becomes clear. If this were true, new verses and laws should have been revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) during the eighty-some days he lived after the revelation of the verse of completion (*āyat al-ikmāl*). Therefore, since no specific law was revealed during this period, we conclude that whatever needed to be said was said, and even if the Prophet had lived for more years afterward, nothing would have been added to Islamic laws.

Here, we must express our regret as to why those who are unfamiliar with Islamic sources and references make uninformed opinions! Why is it that they accept the necessity of expertise in all fields and consider only specialists qualified to comment on those matters, yet in religious matters, everyone dares to express an opinion?!

"Gabriel informed me that the (pleasant) fragrance of Paradise can be smelled from a thousand years' distance, but several groups will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise, including: 1. Those who disobey their parents 2. Those who (without religious excuse) have severed family ties 3. Old men who commit adultery in their old age..."

First, they must have faith in their own words and claims. A deceiver and liar would never engage in *mubāhala*.

Second, such a person must have a close relationship with God, so that when they raise their hands in prayer and curse, their prayer is answered. The scholars of Najran, whether three or ten in number,

recognizing these two principles in the countenance of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and his companions, refrained from *mubāhala*.

"Never reject a peace to which your enemy invites you and in which lies God's pleasure... However, exercise the utmost caution regarding your enemy after making peace, for the enemy sometimes draws near in order to catch you off guard. Therefore, act with prudence and in such matters set aside optimism." (*Nahj al-Balāgha*, Letter 53)

Answer: Evidence and proof are of two types: a) Detailed evidence b) General evidence. In matters of religious principles we need detailed evidence; every Muslim must, according to their capacity and knowledge, seek evidence and proof regarding theology, prophetology, eschatology and Imamology. However, in subsidiary religious matters, detailed evidence is not needed; rather, it's impossiblel Because if every individual was required to know the evidence for all subsidiary religious matters, they would need to study in religious seminaries for decades and abandon all other activities, which is not feasible as it would disrupt the entire social system. Therefore, just as when someone falls ill, they consult a qualified and experienced physician who is trustworthy and caring, without asking for evidence for each prescription, similarly in religious matters, people consult a qualified jurist (*mujtahid*) who has spent years studying, teaching and researching in religious seminaries, has sufficient experience in deriving religious rulings, and is just, trustworthy and caring. They follow his religious guidance without asking for evidence for each ruling. In conclusion, people do not follow their religious authorities blindly, but rather they have general evidence, which is the principle of non-experts referring to experts, and here detailed evidence is not necessary.

Some Sunni scholars responded: "Although Ṭalḥa, Zubayr and ʿĀʾisha were the instigators of the Battle of Jamal, they withdrew before the battle began and their hands were not stained with war!"

In response, I said: Assuming this claim is true, if someone starts a fire, is it sufficient for them to just save themselves and step away from the fire, bearing no responsibility, or to remove responsibility,

must they extinguish the fire they lit?! Then I asked: In the Battle of Ṣiffīn where nearly one hundred thousand Muslims were killed, who is answerable for their blood?

They said: Mu'āwiya was a religious scholar (*mujtahid*) and made a mistake in his interpretation, so he bears no responsibility! I said: If religious interpretation (*ijtihād*) is this broad, extensive and unrestrained, then no sinner should be punished; because they made a mistake in their interpretation! Would any rational person accept such justifications?!

1. The above four possibilities, along with six other possibilities, are mentioned in *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2/382

2. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/107, hadith 150

3. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/106, hadith 147

4. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/79, hadith 116

5. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 1/105, hadith 146

6. *Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 3/122 and *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 6/156. The late Tustarī in *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, 6/52-53, in addition to the above two sources, has quoted the mentioned narration from four other Sunni books.

7. *Al-Istī'āb*, 1109 and *Iḥtijāj Ṭabarsī*, 239.

8. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*, 5/637 (as cited in *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 9/272). There are many narrations with similar content but different wording; however, this specific narration was mentioned here because it contains the word wisdom (*ḥikmat*). For example, the famous narration "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate" is widely reflected in our narrations, and in volume 40 of *Biḥār al-Anwār* alone, it is mentioned twelve times!

9. *Al-Itqān*, type 80, Classes of Exegetes (*Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*).

10. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 1/18-19.

11. *Ṭabaqāt al-Naḥwiyyīn*, 7/14.

12. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 1/17.

13. *Kashf al-Ghumma*, 1/21.

14. *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 11/18.

15. The source for this narration was mentioned a few pages earlier.

16. *Kayhān-i Farhangī*, issue 184, 16.

17. For detailed discussions about the World of Particles (*'ālam al-dharr*), refer to *Tafsīr-i Namūna*, 7/5 onwards.

18. *Al-Jāmi' al-Uṣūl li-Aḥādīth al-Rasūl*, 2/149.

19. *Al-Ghadīr*, 3/117.

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